Political Representation and Civil Societies in São Paulo and Mexico City: A relational approach

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Abstract
Understanding the dynamics of political representation by civil organisations is at the cutting edge of the debate on contemporary democracies. There is systematic evidence, examined elsewhere, that in São Paulo, Brazil, civil organisations play an active role – although not inherently a positive one – in the pluralization of representation both in “traditional” politics and in the arenas opened up by participatory institutions. Assuming that standpoint, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, by comparing São Paulo’s and Mexico City’s civil societies, it shows that this role of pluralization of representation is not equally present in both metropolitan contexts. Second, the paper explores how structural configurations of Brazilian and Mexican civil societies are related to the exercise of political representation by civil organisations. In order to accomplish such aim, we analyse representation claims and identify old and new arguments for representativeness among civil organisations in both cities. We also analyse both the structural position of civil organisations that hold such arguments and the structural configuration of the networks. Initial findings lead us to argue that there is a connection between the structure of the networks and the more common arguments for representativeness by civil society actors in both contexts, and that old and new arguments for representativeness are related to specific niches within civil society networks in the two cities.
I. Introduction

In recent years, a consensus has emerged that political representation in democracies underwent major changes, to the point of reconfiguring the roles played and relationships established between core actors of representative government – political parties, political leaders, voters, and elected officials. Parallel to the process of reconfiguring representative government, another one has taken place: pluralization of representation, that is, multiplication of political representation loci, functions, and actors beyond traditional boundaries of representative government. While there is a consensus in literature that civil society organisations (and the media) are the new actors in the political representation scenario, their practices of political representation are still incipiently understood and assessment of their consequences for democracy remains controversial. This paper deals with the former challenge, by focusing on understanding those practices in terms of representation arguments associated to them and their operation conditions within civil society and before political institutions.

Civil organisations’ exercise of *de jure* and *de facto* representation is increasingly common, having raised questions for democratic theory, traditionally oriented by thematic and analytic separation between actors and values of participation and those of representation. The phenomenon of pluralization of representation, of proliferation of representation experiences oriented to influence bureaucracies and public services by collective actors, has reached dimensions that are enough to acquire the status of an emerging subfield within democratic theory as well as a subject of increasing interest in other theoretical literatures – about civil society, the third sector, or development studies, to mention more evident examples. However, our understanding of the extraordinary diversity of representation practices exercised by civil organisations is still incipient. The implications of pluralization of representation actors for deepening democracy have been more clarified at theoretical level as possible and desirable virtualities than informed by empirical research results specifically dedicated to characterising modalities of representation exercised by civil organisations.

In the following pages, we will examine the notions of representation present in civil societies of two national and urban contexts – Mexico City and São Paulo – as well as the conditions of operation of those notions from the viewpoint of the embeddedness of the actors that sustain them within civil society networks. Civil organisations are

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1 The most influent diagnosis about the reconfiguration of representation is Manin’s (1997), but there are several instances in literature pointing out to similar processes, although under different names (Derrida 1982; Tenzer 1992; Wolton et alii 1992; Abal 1996; Chalmers e Vilas 1997; Novaro 2000; Roberts 2002; Mansbridge 2003; Castiglioni & Warren 2005; Warren 2007).

2 The pluralization of representation thesis was theoretically and empirically developed somewhere else (Gurza Lavalle, Houzager, Acharya 2005; Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, Castello 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Gurza Lavalle, Castello 2008; Izunza, Gurza Lavalle forthcoming). However, other diagnosis about the diversification of representative actors are also available in literature (Chalmers, Scott, Pister 1997; Arato 2002; Friedman, Hochstetler 2002; Santos & Avritzer 2002; Pinto 2004; Gaventa 2004; Urbinati 2006, 2000; Warren 2005; Peruzzotti 2007; Lüchmann 2007; Urbinati & Warren 2007; Törnquist, Webster & Stokke forthcoming).

3 See footnote number 2.

4 For example, Ackerman 2004; Alnoor; Ebrahim; Edward, Weisband 2007; Chandoke mimeo; Cunill 1997; Dagnino 2002; Isunza 2004, 2005, 2006; Fox 2006.
diverse in their objectives, their repertoire of actions, and their conception of both their publics or beneficiaries of their work – hereafter beneficiaries – and the type of relationship to be kept with them. Arguably, self-understanding their action in terms of representation, as well as their own description of the main features of their representation practices should also be diverse.

Civil organisations might certainly advance demands, voice interests, and play highly diverse roles that presuppose exercising some intermediation before the state without, however, understanding their action in terms of representation. Nevertheless, once the character of representative of direct or indirect beneficiaries is publicly assumed, it becomes somehow necessary to formulate representation claims that are able to justify speaking on behalf of others. In order to seriously examine claims invoked by civil organisations that assume representation of their beneficiaries, it is necessary to assume that they are not mere self-promoting rhetorical statements. Such assumption not only has been corroborated elsewhere for Mexico City and São Paulo (Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, Catsello 2006b; Gurza Lavalle, Castello 2008), but also literature itself has paid attention to the constitutive role played by representation claims in any political representation, including in their modalities that are institutionally most crystallised (Saward 2006).

We have shown that claims can be both internally coherent and shared in their meaning by a wide set of actors. When that happens, we categorize closely related claims as arguments of representation. Indeed, the patterns of arguments found provide a consistent overview of the notions or understandings of representation predominant in civil societies in both contexts. More: even though such arguments are analytically built of actors’ own cognitive formulation to signify their practices, actor’s claims tend to explicitly articulate justification criteria, since claims’ formulation is forced by questionings about actor’s legitimacy. Legitimacy is at stake because civil organizations speaking on behalf of direct or diffuse beneficiaries normally is presumptive or self-assumed representation, without clear authorisation or constituencies. Therefore, it becomes possible to reconstruct arguments of representation based on claims’ underlying justifications about actor’s legitimacy or representativeness.

The diagnosis of representation arguments among civil organisations shows their relevance both for their diffusion in the universe of actors studied and for the features that distinguish each argument from other arguments. In other words, empirical subsidies to draw up an overview of representation arguments found in both contexts are cognitive and allow understanding their quantitative importance as well as assessing them within the very symbolic level by examining argument’s internal coherence. Argument’s assessment judges the consonance or dissonance between modalities of legitimacy justification displayed and criteria inherent to democratic representation. Those features have already been examined elsewhere by resorting to accountability as an evaluation parameter, that is, how much the justification of each argument has explicit or implicit relations of information, control, and sanction between representatives and those represented.5

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5 Those features have already been examined elsewhere by resorting to accountability as an evaluation parameter, that is, how much the justification of each argument has explicit or implicit relations of information, control, and sanction between representatives and those represented (Isunza, Gurza Lavalle no prelo, Gurza Lavalle, Castello 2008).
Now, our goal is to further understand the relevance of those representation arguments as to their effectiveness and thus they will be reviewed in the light of their operational conditions. Once organisations articulate certain claims to deal publicly with the issue of representativeness and the resulting arguments offer rich elements to identify and assess the understandings of representation present in Mexican and São Paulo-based civil organisations, it remains to be known whether or not it is possible to further the assessment of effectiveness beyond the symbolic level reconstructed from organisations’ self-perception. After all the higher or lower diffusion and consistency of certain arguments say very little about how effective they are.

In order to further understand the workings of those arguments, we conduct structural analysis of their operational conditions through network analysis. We assume that the better the relational position of the actor sustaining the argument, the higher the chances of the representation it exercises being meaningful in terms of its consequences. The reasons underpinning such argument will be dealt with along the paper. For now, it should be mentioned that intentional consequences of a representative’s actions presuppose their representative status. However, they are not explainable by it, but rather by its relative position in the social domain where representation is exercised. Therefore, it is argued here that the prominence of that position is expressed relationally and it is possible to assess it by network analysis of Mexico City and São Paulo civil organisations.

It is important to highlight that this is a very preliminary paper. The analyses of the networks still need to be improved. These pages contain only part of our results, which were selected because of its clearer implications for deepening our understanding of political representation exercised by civil organizations.

It is possible to summarize the main findings on arguments per se and its structural conditions of operation in two blocks as follows. First, representation claims in São Paulo and Mexico City crystallize in the same six representation arguments (electoral, proximity, services, mediation, membership, identity), although the latter metropolis has dispersion and overlapping of claims rather than consolidation of arguments as its main feature. Second, São Paulo and Mexico City present distinct patterns as for the relation between organisations publicly assuming the representations either of direct or indirect beneficiaries, and their actual involvement with activities of representation. While claiming to be a representative of their beneficiaries and being involved in activities of representation are clearly related in the case of Brazilian civil organizations, the scores of Mexican civil organisations are lower.

Third, the most common arguments are not strictly related with better conditions of operation. Thus, the diffusion of an argument does necessarily imply anything about its effectiveness. In fact, while in São Paulo the least common arguments are the stronger ones from the standpoint of their structural condition of operation, Mexican figures are the opposite, that is, the most invoked argument are also in better position within the network of civil organizations. Fourth, regarding the conditions of operation each argument, network analysis reveals quite contrasting patterns. The better positioned argument in the Mexican capital (“others”) is the worst positioned in the South American city. The opposite is also true. The identity argument, although with small diffusion percentage, has the best structural position en São Paulo and the worst in Mexico City. We believe this finding reflect the growing importance of identity politics in pos-dictatorship Brazil. Five, and last but no least, we found that our analytical
assumption about centrality as a favourable condition for an actor representing its beneficiaries holds at a higher level of abstraction. Both networks in Mexico City and in São Paulo are structurally concentrated, with few civil organizations sending and receiving many more ties than the average. What is more, the level of concentration increases when political institutions are added to civil organizations’ networks. However, concentration is higher in the Brazilian metropolis. In other words, it seems the exercise of practices of political representation before the state by civil organisations is better off when associated to the presence of broad networks with capacity for internal differentiation and hierarchy, which are more common in São Paulo than in Mexico City.

The article is divided into five sections. Firstly, we introduce the arguments and present how they are distributed in Mexico City and São Paulo so as to contextualise the section on structural conditions for operation of representation arguments. Secondly, motivations, concepts and set of hypothesis that guide our work in this paper are presented. Thirdly, the methodology of analysis and the core measures used are briefly explained. The fourth section presents findings. Finally, those findings are discussed considering the debate of previous sections.

II. Representation arguments and their distribution in the two cities

The first step in the strategy adopted in this paper lies in exploring the claims of representation stated by civil organisations themselves and identifying the different arguments that these actors have on the relation between representatives and those represented. As civil organisations on a daily basis engage in activities in which political representation is likely to occur and are faced with the problems of assuming these representational tasks without any models to assert themselves as legitimate representatives, representation claims tend to be formulated and voiced opening room for the crystallization of evolving arguments that are not only credible and reasonable, but also publicly defendable.

In São Paulo, 73% of civil organisations see themselves as representatives of their beneficiaries, while representation by civil organisations in Mexico City reaches 58% of the sample. It is certainly advisable not to jump from stated representation into the level of effectively represented contents. Nevertheless, it is possible to show that there is a relationship between defining oneself as representative and exercising political representation practices, even though that relationship is considerably clearer in São Paulo than in Mexico City.

Four types of activities were considered, where political representation practices usually occur, sometimes as routine. In São Paulo, the following activities were included: participation in new spaces for representation within the Executive, especially policy management and/or participatory budget councils; direct intermediation of demands before specific state agencies; influence on politics through traditional election channels, here measured as support to candidates for public office; and influence on politics by resorting to the Legislative, by advancing demands at the City Council. In

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6 This section is largely based on (Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager and Castello, 2005, Gurza Lavalle, Castello 2008, Isunza and Gurza Lavalle, forthcoming).
the case of Mexico City, there was an attempt to keep the same variables and, with one exception, they are virtually identical to São Paulo’s – with the obvious replacement of the latter’s local parliament, Câmara Municipal, by the former’s Assembléia Legislativa. The exception is related to the problem of compatibility in the variable dealing with participation in spaces for citizen participation. In the questionnaire applied in Mexico City, the question equivalent to the one in São Paulo asked if the interviewed civil organisation took part in some neighbour’s committee or other space dedicated to promoting citizen participation in designing or managing public policies. But in order to make the variable comparable, committees were eliminated with no damage to the quality of the variable.7

Therefore, by simple addition, and after defining activities as dichotomous variables, an index of possible political representation practices was built and used to compare civil organisations that assume and those that refuse to define their work in terms of political representation of their beneficiaries.

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7 The problem here resides precisely in the fact that we considered neighborhood committees as participation spaces. Before dismissing the use of the question, we observed the number of interviewees who indicated some committee when answering that they participated. We found that among the 34% of the sample who said they took part in participatory spaces, only 7 answers were related to Committees. Therefore, those 7 answers were eliminated from the analysis and the variable was maintained for the construction of the index.
Chart 2 – Representation activities according to perception of representation in São Paulo

As shown in Chart 1 and Chart 2, representation declared by civil organisations is clearly associated to the possible exercise of political representation practices. In São Paulo, while about 66% of civil organisations that said not to represent their beneficiaries carry out one (29%) or none (37.1%) of the four activities described above, 77% of those that define themselves as representatives carry out more than two of those activities. In Mexico City, 69% of the organisations that declared not to represent their beneficiaries carry out one (29%) or no (40%) representation activity and, 48% of those that defined themselves as representatives carry out two or more of those activities.

Therefore, even though representation stated by civil organisations has some base on their de facto political representation activities, it should be pointed out that there are relevant differences between Mexico City and São Paulo. While in the latter, 52% of organisations that see themselves as representatives carry out 3 or 4 representation activities, in the former, only 22% of such organisations exercise the same number of representation activities.

The reasons mentioned by the civil organisations to justify stated representation make up large constellations of meanings and the typology presented here reinforces them and systematises their core elements. Thus, the typology of representation arguments is a result of empirical investigation, needs no a priori normative conceptual elements and, in principle, means nothing regarding the way civil organisations should build their modalities of political representation. Each argument constitutes a particular modality to ordain relations between representative, those represented, and locus of representation, whose distinctive note is the emphasis given by the civil organisation to

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8 The locus is at once the place where representation is exercised and the interlocutors before which it is exercised, namely public authorities, but not only that – other civil society actors as well and ultimately society as a whole.
certain characteristics of those relations. The reasons presented by civil organisations define six arguments for justification, present in both contexts: electoral, proximity, service, mediation, membership, identity,\(^9\).

**Electoral argument.** Civil organisations cite the existence of electoral mechanisms for selecting leaders or management as evidence of their representativeness. Leaving aside the specific designs of those mechanisms within different organisational contexts, we are largely talking about a *de facto* justification. This is because selection processes are used that are accepted by and synonymous with democracy and representative government. In this case, because they are using a widely accepted mechanism, it is possible for the actors to “ensure” the legitimacy of their representation by means of a formal-procedural argument, i.e. the carrying out of elections, avoiding specificities about their content. Even so, in a number of cases voting is mentioned together with other factors associated with elections, in an effort to show organisations’ commitment to the participation of their public – campaigns, assemblies, minimal restrictions on voting, rendering of accounts, etc. The argument has an implicit locus, where the elected will carry out their representation.

**Proximity argument.** Civil organisations emphasise the intimacy of the relationship to their public, citing linkages characterised by closeness and horizontality as a demonstration of their genuine interest and role as representatives. In contrast to the electoral argument, which is centred on the single electoral element, proximity between representative and those represented is constructed from diverse elements and from their multiple possible combinations: emancipation, or commitment to enhancing the ability of members of its public ability to organise themselves, hence encouraging their agency; empathy, or a profound commitment to beneficiaries by affinity, solidarity and real identification with their problems and needs; openness, or the readiness to garner and stimulate direct participation and the opinions of their public in the planning and direction of the work of the organisation. Finally, the last component is recognition, which makes organisations say they act as representatives not because they believe they are representatives per se but because they derive that status from the fact that their public frequently seeks them out and praised their work. Although it does not necessarily coincide with public authority, and there is not a locus specified or suggested, there is clearly an implicit locus in the logic of this argument, since favouring protagonism, demand-making, and problem-solving capacity of the beneficiary points to an assumed interlocutor.

**Service argument.** The emphasis in this argument also falls on the relationship between the civil organisation that assumes the role of representative and those it represents although in a very different sense to that of the proximity argument. In this case, the organisation’s representativeness is based on its actions in the improvement of the lives of others, by providing services to its public, from distinct medical treatments to distribution of staple foods and including skills training, scholarships, moral support, and several other forms of assistance. In other words, the reasons cited point to the direct action of the civil organisation. If in the majority of the arguments the locus is somewhat blurred, here it is omitted entirely and is not even hinted at.

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\(^9\) The residual category *others* was created to include justifications by actors that neither fit in the categories defined in the typology nor present enough patterns and similarities to create new categories of arguments.
Mediation argument. Of the six arguments, this one is exceptional in that the civil organisation bases its representativeness not on the relationship with the beneficiary but with the locus of representation. Mediation roles played by the organisation open up access to public decision-making institutions (locus) that otherwise would remain inaccessible. Two components come together in the development of the argument. First, actually carrying out the mediation activity, that is to say, the actor normally plays a mediating role before public authorities. Second, the mediating capacity of the actor with different public institutions is used to make claims in the interest of its public and not to bargain for gifts or favours. In contrast to the previous arguments, the actor’s relationship to its public, the represented, is left unclear or unspecified.

Membership argument. Civil organisations, which use membership as evidence of their representativeness, emphasise the simultaneous genesis of the actor and of the matter to be represented. That is, we are not only talking about organisations being specifically created to represent individuals or actors involved in their creation but in particular civil organisations that represent interests that were institutionalised and laid down only by means of the respective organisation being founded. In this way the represented and the representative are produced by the same process. Here again, the appeal is to reasons of fact and, in this respect, the similarity to the electoral argument is not coincidental. This use of a de facto representation is viable because it is based on socially accepted and legitimised principles and it can be supported without having to make its contents explicit. The locus is essential to the argument as the creation of an actor with representative intentions only makes sense in the presence of predefined interlocutors and institutions which, in most cases, although not exclusively, are public authorities.

Identity argument. Civil organisations appeal to substantive like-mindedness between representatives and those represented as the hinge of representativeness. Such like-mindedness follows a logic that is radically opposed to that presented in the membership argument. The representative mirrors the will of those represented by virtue of existential qualities that are usually impossible to renounce to, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin. These are qualities that in theory are imbued with a more or less clear definition of the interests of those to be represented. In other words, representativeness is based on identity and supposes, by means of that identity, the elimination of difference between those represented and the representative: women represent women, blacks represent blacks, and so forth. Again in this case the locus is vaguely implicit.

Comparatively, results from both cities contrast and allow showing clearly distinct patterns, with relevant implications for understanding actors’ action abilities and repertoires. Chart 2 summarises comparative results of the typology of arguments. By reviewing figures corresponding to the presence of multiple, residual and non-classifiable arguments as justifications for representation, one can notice relevant differences in the degree of stabilisation of the arguments in both cities. The fact that the overwhelming majority of civil organisations in São Paulo (94%) resort to only one argument while 19% of Mexico’s organisations resort to several of them at once suggests the presence of relatively more stabilised articulations in the former context. Besides, over 10% of organisations in Mexico City use three or more arguments while in São Paulo only 1% of the sample use three of them. That is in sync with the high dispersion of representation arguments found in the Mexican capital. In other words,
22% of arguments mentioned by Mexican civil organisations are residual and were classified as “others”, since they were neither classifiable in the typology of arguments nor presented enough similarities to configure another argument. In the Brazilian city, in turn, the residual category “others” includes only 3% of the sample. Finally, it was also not possible to classify as arguments for representation, that is, as legitimacy justifications, 5% of articulations pronounced by civil organisations in Mexico City. Strictly speaking, the category “no argument” includes answers that, even under highly broad criteria, do not configure a justification regarding beneficiaries. In São Paulo’s sample, there was no organisation included in that category.

By and large, the electoral, identity and membership arguments are known or constitutive to the history of modern democracy, and are often treated in the field of representation theories, but they appear in a secondary position, in quantitative terms, as arguments of representation exercised by civil organisations interviewed, varying between 4% and 15% (Chart 2). In the meanwhile, the most often invoked arguments – service, proximity, mediation – with percentages between 13% and 31%, correspond fully to modalities of assumed representation.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} Assumed representation is defined here as forms of unilateral representation by those that exercise it and non-authorised by beneficiaries on behalf of whom they are exercised. Gurza Lavalle and Isunza
Besides the more general distribution, there are some interesting discrepancies and similarities between São Paulo and Mexico City regarding each type of argument. For instance, the percentage of organisations that mobilise the electoral argument in Mexico City (15%) is nearly four times higher than in São Paulo (4%), which can be attributed to effects of the Law of Citizen Participation on the boom of neighbour’s committees and the resulting adoption and generalisation of a specific organisational form recognised and regulated by law. The mediation argument, in turn, is the most often invoked justification in São Paulo (31%), while in Mexico City it comes in fourth (13%). The service argument is invoked by several organisations in both contexts, but it is most often invoked in Mexico City (21%) and only third place in São Paulo (23%). Proximity occupies a similar place in Mexico City (16%) and São Paulo (27%), being the second most used argument in the South American city and in the Mexican capital – even though, in percentage terms, it is more often used in São Paulo than in Mexico City. Identity (4% in Mexico City and 5% in São Paulo) and membership (5% and 7%, respectively) are less frequent.

However, that sort of analysis says nothing about conditions of operation of those arguments, that is, the chances of the representation exercised by organisations be more or less effective in terms of consequences. Therefore, we resort, in the next sections, to relational analysis that allows evaluating the relevance of a certain actor (and its attributes) by the relative position it occupies in the network of actors where it is located.

III. Hypotheses and structural operational conditions of the arguments

The diagnosis about the presence of distinct representation arguments (whether or not they are presumptive or assumed) within civil organisations, as well as the analysis of the different logics of legitimacy present in them constitute an advancement to understand the new functions of political representation exercised by civil organisations and their implications from the point of view of democratic theory. The possible relevance of such findings for ongoing debates about reconfiguration of political representation and about deepening democracy has been conducted in more detail elsewhere and there is no point in resuming it here.¹¹

However, since the diagnosis takes place at the symbolic level, it is unable to clarify the capability for operation of those arguments, and how they are actually invoked or put in motion in actors’ practices. Of course, it faces insurmountable restrictions regarding identification of interests effectively represented in those practices. According to what has been exposed in the previous section, the option to refer the analysis to the symbolic level is an analytical resource rather than a conceptual definition about the separation between actors’ “material” or actual practice and the “world of ideas” or the ideation about their practices. Indeed we sustain that the demands imposed by actors’ practices lead to sedimentation and stabilisation of representation arguments. The

Vera (forthcoming) summarise the several forms that such notion has taken in the theoretical debate: “By and large, new representation modalities exercised by collective actors (and more specifically by civil organisations) lack authorisation, that is, they are exercised in a virtual, unilateral, assumedly, surrogate), self-authorised way, as mediated politics and in the exercise citizen representation or simply advocacy, as discursive representatives – to mention only some of the terms of a growing semantic repertoire to apprehend and confer meaning to the complex pluralization of ongoing representation” (p.33, manuscript).

¹¹ See footnotes 2 and 5.
patterns found on the distribution of arguments themselves and their connection to the repertoire of four activities conducive to representation examined in both cities show that such understanding is plausible. First, the representation arguments find support to distinct degrees in the repertoire of activities normally carried out by civil organisations before distinct spaces or bodies of public decision making. Secondly, sedimentation or crystallisation of arguments finds itself notably more developed in the South-American city. Third, and according to such difference in the crystallisation of arguments, the association between activities of representation and arguments is more consistent in São Paulo. In other words, arguments of representation are far from being mere rhetoric enthusiasm. Even so, arguments’ capability for operation, their invoking or actualisation by civil organisations or the interests represented by such invoking remain untouched.

The relational approach adopted here allows partially overcoming the limits inherent to cognitive survey data such as those used in constructing the typology of representation arguments. It also allows a more judicious reading of the meaning of coincidences and discrepancies between representation activities and arguments. The argument is relatively simple and can be synthetically expressed as the formula “arguments’ structural conditions of operation”: the better the relational position of the actor sustaining the argument, the higher the chances of its representative role being meaningful in terms of consequences.\(^{12}\) The connection proposed here between the actor’s relational position and its implications for the operation of arguments brings together knowledges of both relational sociology and network analysis, and recent developments in the field of representation theories.

While the intentional consequences of a representative’s actions presuppose their representative status, they cannot be explained by that status, but rather by the relative position representative has in the social domain where representation is exercised. The effects of the prominence of an actor and the resources associated to that position are well known by sociology and political science (Bourdieu 2001; Stinchcombe 1987: 131-ss). It is argued here both that the prominence of a civil organisation is expressed relationally – that is, for its centrality in the universe of civil society actors – and that the perception of the actor’s importance by its interlocutors increases the effectiveness of its actions. Even more: if those analytical assumptions are correct, we can say, at a more abstract level and within reasonable limits, that the exercise of representation practices before public authorities by civil organisations is favourably associated to the presence of broad networks capable of internal differentiation and hierarchization.\(^{13}\)

Traditionally, representation theories have not paid attention to differences of importance between representatives. More precisely, political representation has been

\(^{12}\) It would be possible to use the relational approach to reflect upon the quality of arguments, exploring the consequences of actors’ position in the network from the viewpoint of the control exerted over them by other actors and how much that control can encourage the accountability of that actor. In other words, structural conditions of operation for representation arguments are related to the quality of representation when the relational fabric where actors are is conceived as a control structure. That task is beyond the purposes of this paper.

\(^{13}\) By the way, the implications of such a statement, in principle, damage normative valorisation of civil society’s networks due to their horizontality and ability for action – a valorisation that is often present in literatures committed to deepening democracy and democratic governance. There is no space here for the careful dialogue those literatures deserve; the attempt is only to point out a possible instigating development caused by the analytical focus adopted in this paper.
characterised by a relationship between representative and those represented, where the former is committed to acting in the latter’s best interest (Pitkin 1967; Przeworski, Adam; Susan C. Stokes; Bernard Manin 1999a, 199b, Urbinati, Warren 2008). By and large, such relationship is defined so as to include a moment of authorisation and accountability devices, as well as circumscribing the legitimacy of the representative’s action to a specific locus. Recent developments in the field of representation theories, however, have looked at the fact that every political representation contains a fundamental component of claiming, or, more emphatically, in Saward’s words – “all political representation is a claim” (Saward 2006; Sawer, Zappala 2001). More precisely, “the world of political representation is a world of claim-making rather than fact-adducing. (Saward 2006: 302). Regardless of the corrosive consequences of an emphatic interpretation of such a proposition, discursive treatments of representation bring to the surface a crucial element of representation absent from traditional theories, namely, the public or interlocutors that accept the representative status of those who say they speak on behalf of somebody. In other words, representatives – members of parliament, for instance – can play their roles not only because of more or less formal processes of electoral authorisation and sanction, but also because the public – their peers in Congress – before which they project their demands and claims consider them as representatives of interests invoked. The public’s relevance as a component of representation has also deserved attention in a more traditional view, concerned not with introducing relativism about any form of political representation, but with developing a minimalist definition of representation that excludes its normative components (Rehfeld 2000).

Our analytical argument for the effect of an actor’s prominence methodologically relies on the analysis of the structural operational conditions of the repertoire of representation arguments found in both contexts. Although that move, from concept to methodology seems straightforward, making it empirically operational demands caution. Once network analysis’s relational perspective is assumed, there is a risk of incurring in tautology, since, if the world is relational and anything can be explained by networks, a relationship pattern will always be found to which certain effects can be imputed. That is why it is necessary to define and specify analytically our previous expectations – whose methodological aspects will be approached in the next section.

Before making expected results explicit, it is important to briefly present the sets of measures that will be used for the analysis – chosen precisely for their usefulness to quantify the relevance of actors in their respective networks as well as the degree of hierarchization and centralisation of the networks as a whole in the two urban contexts.14. (i) Centrality measures, by and large, are used to identify the prominence of a certain actor within the network, which can be assessed in several ways: by that actor’s incoming ties (passive centrality), by its outgoing ties (active centrality), by the indirect ties (indirect centrality), or by the position it occupies intermediating relations between actors (betweenness).15 (ii) Reciprocity measures, in turn, indicate the presence or not of bidirectionality or reciprocal relations between actors, if the outgoing ties from an actor

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14 It is worth pointing out that, also in this case, measures will be explained in more detail in the methodology section of the paper.

15 In order for civil organisations’ incoming and outgoing ties to be characterized as active and passive centrality, examining the same set of São Paulo-based actors, see Gurza Lavalle, Bichir and Castello (2007; 2008). Indirect centrality is defined based on the Bonacich centrality measure (1987).
to other actors are reciprocated by these actors, that is, if relations between actors are symmetrical or asymmetrical. (iii) Finally, network structural measures point to general characteristics not of specific positions of certain actors or, in this case, of representation arguments, but rather of the network itself, that is, of the total network of actors where those arguments are invoked.

If the effectiveness of the representation arguments is altered by the actor’s prominence, it becomes crucial to distinguish when such prominence is a result of the prestige or recognition of the actor’s importance and therefore, of the fact that it is sought after (passive centrality), and when it is derived from an active strategy of seeking its peers and, arguably, better positions in the field (active centrality). Thus, the conjunction of the two first sorts of measures reveals simultaneously the actor’s position in terms of its centrality and the relational logic underlying such position.

Network structural measures, in turn, allow testing and raising the level of generalisation of our analytical argument and findings. Firstly, there might be some correspondence between structural conditions of operation and their connection to specific representation arguments, on the one hand, and more general characteristics of networks of civil organisations from urban contexts, on the other. Secondly, differences on patterns found show both that there is higher correspondence between arguments of representation and activities conducive to representation in Sao Paulo than in Mexico City, and the higher dispersion of claims on the latter metropolis. Therefore, the general characteristics of the network could be correspondingly more favourable in the Brazilian city metropolis.

Which, then, are the expectations regarding the results of those three groups of measures? By and large, (i) we assume that passive centrality is a favourable structural condition of operation, since it strengthens those who invoke the argument before their interlocutors. (ii) Active centrality, in turn, mirrors the actor’s strategic action and presents ambiguous features, since it can express a good structural positions or the quest for such a position. That is why active centrality can be expected to be a favourable condition of operation only when followed by reciprocity by some of the sought after actors. The absence of reciprocity – asymmetry – suggests the actor’s irrelevance and its option for a strategy of construction of ties to compensate its more or less peripheral condition. Centrality might result not only from the actor’s direct ties, but also from its own indirect ties and from its positions as intermediary in the pathway of ties between other actors and of. (iii) In the later case, the capability to intermediate other actors seems to indicate favourable conditions of operation as long as it derives from passive centrality or the type of active centrality marked by reciprocity. In other words, high intermediation indexes are not considered indications of prominence or relevance when they are tied to “broker” or “gate keeper” positions without centrality derived from incoming ties, but rather with high centrality generated by outgoing ties and low reciprocity. (iv) In the former case, centrality resulting form actor’s indirect ties is taken as a structural favourable condition of operation if, only if, it appears together with high passive centrality or with high reciprocity and active centrality. Those are the two criteria adopted in the first expectations. (v) Finally, and according to previous expectations, we presume that more centralisation and intermediation ability of the network as a whole, within reasonable limits, define more favourable general conditions for exercising practices and representations by civil organisations before public authorities. In a few words, that would mean general conditions of operation of representation by both civil societies.
It should be mentioned that reciprocity measures can be meaningful per se, that is, regardless of how they clarify the results of centrality measures. This is particularly the case when extreme cases of symmetry or asymmetry occur in comparison to average results. Under those circumstances, the figures will deserve a commentary, as empirical findings about which there were no pre-defined expectations.

IV. Notes on data and methodology

Databanks used in this work result from project “Rights, Representation and the Poor - Comparing Large Developing Country Democracies: Brazil, India, and Mexico”. Two surveys were conducted between 2002 and 2003, in São Paulo, Brazil, and in Mexico City, Federal District, Mexico, respectively. Both surveys used the same methodological procedures to define the sample, generated by snowball and aiming at identifying the civil organisations that are most active with underprivileged groups of the population. Snowball is a sampling modality particularly suitable for network analyses when the universe of actors remains unknown or is not accessible, such as the case of civil organisations.

In turn, relational perspective approaches, especially by methods and techniques suitable for network analysis, have shown to be fruitful to treat the sort of actors dealt with here, whether it is in understanding typical modalities of coordination and ordaining civil society actors in democratic contexts (Baldassari & Diani, 2007) or in understanding new forms of governance and cooperation (Schneider, Scholz, Lubell, Mindruta, Edwardson, 2003) or yet in interpreting how the “civic arena” is composed after relations between discourses/projects and organisational links (Mische, 2000), or in examining recruitment and participation of social movements (Diani & McAdam, 2003).

So far, most of the investment in analysis and interpretation of the surveys’ relational data conducted within the framework of the larger project concentrated in the city of São Paulo in order to understand the modus operandi of those organisations, that is, how they are structured in terms of their actors’ centrality and cohesion, identifying core protagonists, peripheral actors and patterns for alliances, and preferential ties between São Paulo’s civil society actors.

The analysis of structural conditions of operation of representation arguments demands the identification of the position in the network of the actors that invoke them, as well as their relative differences and their relationship to actors that invoke other

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17 Gurza Lavalle, Castello & Bichir (2004; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b). The main findings of those works are the following: Firstly, “the universe of civil organisations is hierarchical and unequal in their capacities for action and interlocution” (Gurza Lavalle, Castello & Bichir, 2007b, p.488). Secondly, popular organisations, NGOs and coordinating bodies are the core protagonists, acting as the main references for other types of actors. Thirdly, organisations in more peripheral positions (with more local common relations), such as neighbourhood or community associations, despite suffering restrictions by the position they occupy, have access to more central entities. Finally, although they have low centrality, service non-profit organisations and forums stand out as bridge-actors between several types of organisations.
arguments. Standard measures of network analysis will be set in motion to determine the prominence of arguments – better structural conditions of operation –; measures that are briefly described in this section to give way to interpretation of findings in the following section.

Network analysis operates on two basic units: nodes (here called actors) and relations (ties) between them. The “node” unit of analysis is, in this case, civil organisations. On the type of relations to be analysed, survey questionnaires allowed to identify the existence of formal relations between civil organisations and between them and other actors and institutions. Organisations interviewed – leaders or board members – were asked not to mention more than five organisations considered as the most important for their work. The question was repeated for different types of civil organisations interviewed, always asking about the most valuable ties for their work. Since organisations were asked to mention only their main relations with other entities, whether formal or informal, it may be inferred that: 1) such relations are meaningful and relevant for organisations, and 2) ties indicate organisations with which respondents effectively work or try to be associated, that is, the existence of relations in the sample is associated to the practical relevance of the tie and the prestige of the referred organisation.

Descriptive measures are used for data analysis, referring to centrality and reciprocity, to which descriptive cohesion measures are added at the moment of network structural measures. The core measures used have already been quickly discussed in the previous section, but we now offer some more precise methodological details so as to allow an informed reading about the origin of the results to be presented next.

The number of relations each actor has is called degree, and for asymmetrical networks, organisations can have a different number of outgoing (outdegree) and incoming (indegree) ties. It is important to outline that centrality measures are due to relationship patterns established between actors and not an attribute per se (Scott, 1992). Degree centrality measures, for instance, indicate the relevance of the actor simply for its number of connections, whether they are outgoing or incoming. Considering that the network of interviewed organisations is asymmetrical (ordered), it is possible to distinguish between passive centrality (of degree) and active centrality (of degree). In turn, mediation centrality measures point out somehow to a privileged position of certain actors in the pathways between other pairs of actors. In other words, actors with higher levels of intermediation (betweenness) have higher capacity to control flows and interconnections between other actors within the network. Finally, indirect centrality measures (Bonacich centrality measure) take into consideration actors’ indirect ties. An actor with high centrality has ties with actors that, in their turn, have several ties. Therefore, those actors have a large and multiple reach in the network due to their indirect ties.

Reciprocity measures refer to the proportion of an actor’s symmetrical ties – whether outgoing or incoming. It is about measuring which proportion of an actor’s ties is sent “back” by the recipient actor or vice-versa.

Descriptive cohesion measures such as density, transitivity, and clustering, here applied to the network’s general structure, seek to measure the level of density of the network itself, analysing the ratio between the number of existing ties and the number of possible ties (density), as well as analysing the neighbourhood (clustering)
and closed triads (transitivity) of the network. In more general terms, it is also possible to assess a network’s level of concentration both in terms of centrality of degree and in terms of centrality of mediation, when compared to a hypothetical network (the star network) of maximum concentration – centralisation of degree and centralisation of betweenness. Actors are also connected at variable distances between themselves: they can be “neighbours” and be at a step from each other with direct tie or they can be at more than a step from each other, with indirect ties. Therefore, it is possible to assess the “proximity” between actors by calculating the shortest average (geodesic) distances between them.

Finally, it is important to highlight that there is no point in analysing any isolated measure. Measures only have full meaning when interpreted in a combined way, focusing on the configuration of consistent patterns. That is why interpretation will take into account scores obtained in more than one measure so that the analysis does not depend on one or another measure.

V. Empirical analysis and findings

Data analysis includes two stages. The first one analyses results related to structural conditions of representation arguments in the two cities, identifying those at more or less prominent positions in the network. The second stage describes in structural terms the configuration of the network in Mexico City and in São Paulo, in order to improve the degree of generalisation of patterns found at the first stage or, more precisely, to clarify the general conditions for the operation of representation by civil organisations in each context.

The analysis of representation arguments considered only civil organisations interviewed, since only for those there is information on representation arguments mobilised. A decision was made to analyse only one of the arguments of the organisations that had several of them (up to three). The choice of the argument was based on the general distribution of arguments in each city, and the more frequent argument in each city was chosen so as to reinforce general patterns of the two distributions. For instance, in the case of São Paulo, if an organisation justifies its representation by arguments of identity and services, the latter was selected as that organisation’s representation attribute.

The computation of network measures included both organisations that assume and those that do not assume the representation of their beneficiaries. The decision to include those organisations was made because they are part of the network of civil organisations and their patterns of relations with organisations that invoke representation arguments are relevant to describe and understand the operational conditions of those arguments.

It should be pointed out that, even though actors are the units of analysis, we analyse and present the results based on the representation arguments invoked by the actors.

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18 For more detail about the measures mentioned along the text, see Wasserman and Faust (1994) and Scott (1992).

19 For more references on centralisation measures, see Hanneman (2005).

20 The focus of this work is on comparison and analysis between arguments and therefore results are not presented on actors that do not assume the representation of their beneficiaries.
Therefore, measures are calculated from actors and their ties, but when we analyse the results of the measures, they are aggregated and presented according to the attribute we are interested in: representation arguments.

In order to identify centrality patterns – which define structural conditions for operation of representation arguments – the first four criteria presented in section 3 were used at this stage of the analysis. In sum, there was a search for: (i) arguments with high passive centrality; (ii) arguments with high active centrality, as long as they are followed by high reciprocity of the outgoing ties; (iii) arguments with high betweenness centrality and passive centrality or high active centrality, as long as they are followed by high reciprocity of outgoing ties; (iv) arguments with high centrality by indirect effects, under the same criteria applied to the previous expectation. The analysis will pay more attention to extreme results, that is, to arguments with the best and worst structural conditions for operation. That is because, even though it is possible to identify a prominence gradation in the arguments, the patterns of centrality are not so clear for hierarchizing each of them, particularly in the case of Mexico City. São Paulo, on the other hand, displays clearer patterns.

Tables 1 and 2 sum up the results of the first stage for Mexico City and São Paulo, respectively. The figures they present are a ratio between the value obtained by the type of argument and the average of that measure for all arguments. A value of ‘1.6’, for instance, means a result 60% over the average; ‘1’ indicates an average value and, ‘0.75’ should be read as a result 25% below the average. Differently from other measures, indirect centrality should be read as the lowest ratios indicating higher indirect centrality. For instance, ‘0.20’ means higher indirect centrality than a ‘1.7’.

**Mexico City findings**

Three groups can be identified in Mexico City. The categories *others* and *services* outstand as being more central. Dispersion of arguments in Mexico, as indicated by the inflation of the category *others*, and the lower coincidence between representation practices and public acceptance of representation of their beneficiaries by civil organisations is in agreement with the fact that actors that invoke those disperse arguments occupy more central positions in the network. Results seem to point out not only dispersion of representation practices, but also the fact that those practices are carried out without having to account for their legitimacy criteria. Similarly, the service argument – certainly the thorniest one from the point of view of its democratic implications and often associated to more traditional charity organisations – occupies a highly central position.

*Others* has passive centrality, active centrality, betweenness centrality, and reciprocity of outgoing ties above the average – in terms of passive centrality and mediation, is the highest-scoring category. *Services*, in turn, has average passive centrality and above-the-average betweenness centrality as well as reciprocity of outgoing ties, with relatively high scores.
Table 1 – Centrality and reciprocity measures in Mexico City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Active Centrality</th>
<th>Passive Centrality</th>
<th>Indirect Centrality</th>
<th>Betweenness Centrality</th>
<th>Reciprocity (Out)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rights, Representation and the Poor: Comparing Large Developing Countries – Brazil, India, and Mexico

A second group, with less favourable structural conditions of operation, includes the categories proximity, electoral and mediation, where arguments are well-positioned along a centrality scale, but such behaviour is not consistently repeated in other measures. Proximity and mediation, for instance, have above-the-average and relatively high values for passive centrality and betweenness centrality. Electoral has high indirect centrality and, just like mediation, has high reciprocity of outgoing ties, but both categories have below the average active centrality.

The third group includes arguments in worse structural conditions of operation: identity and membership. The precarious position of the identity argument suggests, firstly, that the so-called politics of difference and its actors enjoy very limited recognition and face conditions that do not favour their demands being seen as legitimate and being met. By the way, in that aspect, São Paulo’s figures over Mexico City ones are extremely high. Secondly, results also point out the peripheral character of actors constituted by statutory membership, who usually invoke the membership argument.

Indeed, both arguments occupy less central positions more consistently than the positions of other arguments. Identity, although it has the highest value of active centrality, does not have even one outgoing tie that is reciprocal, just as it features passive and indirect centrality measures well below the average. Membership, in turn, has mediation capacity and reciprocity of outgoing ties well below the average, as well as low active centrality.

Nevertheless, despite being in the same group, identity and membership have distinct profiles in a specific aspect. Even though organisations that invoke identity and membership arguments have low centrality scores regarding the average, the relationship between passive and active centrality is very different in both arguments. As can be seen in Chart 4 below, there is high relative discrepancy in terms of outgoing and incoming ties for identity and membership arguments. Organisations that have been classified as having identity arguments have much more outgoing than incoming ties, while the opposite takes place with those classified in the argument of membership. The difference in profile between those arguments of low prominence in the network might indicate two distinct meanings of a “unfavoured” structural position for exercising representation practices. The fact that organisations with identity arguments have many outgoing ties – without a single one being corresponded – and few incoming ties might indicate an active strategy of search for prestige and presence in the field, and from a position of isolation. Membership organisations, in turn, have few outgoing ties in
relation to incoming ones, suggesting simultaneously that actors do not see an advantageous cost-benefit relationship in establishing those ties, if their position is more established and consolidated, more institutionalised, and perhaps, enclosed for having source of legitimacy in its own members. Finally, mediation also sees discrepancies between the number of outgoing and incoming ties, with a higher number of the latter regarding the former.

Chart 4 – Outgoing and incoming ties per argument of representation in Mexico City

It is possible to identify four groups in São Paulo, since the argument that stands out, identity, presented extreme values in two of the measures analysed, being considered separately from the others. Identity presents surprising results for more than one reason. It not only reveals a pattern totally opposed to that found in Mexico City and displays a high advantage over other arguments, but also sustains such advantage despite being an argument with low diffusion between São Paulo-based civil organisations, as shown in Section 2. It would be difficult not to speculate about structural conditions of operation more favourable to the argument and the growth of racial and gender policies in recent years in Brazil, especially in São Paulo. Favourable political conditions for actors committed to identity-based representation practices, in turn – as will be demonstrated below – bestowed such legitimacy on them as to eventually make them into a reference for a broad range of actors.

São Paulo findings

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Data are telling: identity presents passive and betweenness capacity with scores more than twice the average, as well as active centrality and reciprocity of outgoing ties above the average.
**Table 2 – Centrality and Reciprocity Measures in São Paulo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Active Centrality</th>
<th>Passive Centrality</th>
<th>Indirect Centrality</th>
<th>Betweenness Centrality</th>
<th>Reciprocity (Out)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rights, Representation and the Poor: Comparing Large Developing Countries – Brazil, India, and Mexico

Proximity and membership make up the second group, the latter argument having passive and indirect centrality above the average, with relatively high values as well as the third highest score for betweenness centrality, although lower than average. Note the discrepant position of the membership argument regarding Mexico City; that is, in São Paulo, organisations constituted through formal association mechanisms, which account to a reasonable degree for invoking the membership argument, occupy more relevant positions. It is known that a new generation of that sort of organisations called coordinating bodies was created in São Paulo in the post-transition context to coordinate actions and represent the interests of other civil organisations. Proximity, in turn, has active centrality and reciprocity of outgoing ties above the average, with passive centrality a little below the average, but has the third best position (after identity and membership); it also features betweenness a little above the average, being second in that measure (after identity). Since identity presents extreme values in terms of passive centrality and betweenness and the average is a measure affected by extreme values, it is important to observe the ranking of measures, and not only its value regarding the average.

The third group includes mediation and services. Both present higher than average indirect centrality, the latter having active centrality combined with reciprocity of outgoing ties higher than average.

And finally, the categories electoral and others make up the fourth group, which displays the worst structural conditions of operation to exercise representation for the actors that invoke it. The electoral argument is not among the three highest positions for any of the measures and is the lowest for active centrality. Others is among the lowest positions for all of them, except for one measure (indirect centrality). Again, the pattern is consistent with the results of the second section and contrasting when compared to results found for Mexico City. The very low level of dispersion in the South American city – attributed to the increment in practices of representation explicitly recognised with that character, is corroborated by the advantageous positions of Others. The electoral argument occupies a higher relative positioning Mexico City.

It is interesting to note that, in São Paulo, two of the most central arguments – identity and membership – present a high relative discrepancy in terms of outgoing and
incoming ties. The organisations that invoke those arguments have many more incoming than outgoing ties, reinforcing their prestigious positions and, of course, their corresponding arguments. Comparing Charts 4 and 5 for Mexico City and São Paulo, identity and membership present relevant discrepancies between outgoing and incoming ties. As mentioned above, membership in both cities has a higher average of incoming than outgoing ties. Identity, in turn, in Mexico City, has a much higher number of outgoing than incoming ties, while in São Paulo, the pattern is reversed: identity has more incoming than outgoing ties.

**Chart 5 – Outgoing and incoming ties per argument of representation in São Paulo**

*Normalized Measures

Source: Project Rights, Representation and the Poor: Comparing Large Developing Country Democracies - Brazil, India and Mexico

**Networks’ structural measures**

So far, the most and the least prominent arguments in each city were identified and thus, we have pointed out some indications about their best or worst conditions of operation. Beyond specific patterns in each context, we found relevant differences in Mexico City and in São Paulo, notably the discrepancy of position of identity, others, and membership arguments.

However, from data analysed so far it is not possible to make remarks – not even speculate – about general operational conditions for representation by organisations in each context. As already shown in Section III, it can be argued that centralisation of the network of civil organisations increments the chances of influencing public authorities and, in this case, the chances of speaking on behalf of others being taken into consideration. In sum, if arguments developed in Section III are correct, and within reasonable limits, network centralisation leads to a higher possibility of representation by civil organisations before public authorities. Therefore, more centralised networks
offer, in principle, better conditions of operation for the representation exercised by civil organisations.

Table 3 – Structural measures for Mexico City and São Paulo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Mexico City</th>
<th>São Paulo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Civil society and institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of actors</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% isolated</td>
<td>1.83% (11)</td>
<td>1.29% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitivity</td>
<td>13.97%</td>
<td>11.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clustering Coefficient</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average geodesic distance</td>
<td>5.201</td>
<td>4.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average degree</td>
<td>3.275</td>
<td>3.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralisation of degree</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralisation of betweenness</td>
<td>11.74%</td>
<td>19.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rights, Representation and the Poor: Comparing Large Developing Countries – Brazil, India, and Mexico

Two delimitations were defined for the networks in México City and in São Paulo. Besides the delimitation used systematically along this paper – civil organisation networks – we decided to incorporate a new one that is able to examine those networks together with their connections to the universe of political institutions. With those two delimitations, it is possible to have a more general overview about the configuration of the networks, since the inclusion of political institutions allows controlling their general configuration in both contexts, precisely by including a new constellation of actors of a different kind. Furthermore, including political institutions allows analysing the effect of their entrance under general condition of operations of representation in each context,

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21 To calculate all measures in the spheres defined, networks were made symmetrical, since actors included in the calculation were not interviewed. Besides, in order to generate descriptive measures for the network structure, isolates were excluded from the analysis, for they do not allow proper calculation of several measures.

22 It considered civil organisations in São Paulo: NGOs, popular organisations, neighbourhood associations, community associations, service non-profit organisations, pastoral commissions, coordinating bodies, forums and others. In Mexico City: NGO, Popular Organisation, Neighbourhood/Neighbours/Settlers Association, community association, service non-profit organisation, neighbours committee, networks, forums and others. Political institutions, in both cities, included: political parties, new participatory (councils, committees, other spaces), public institutions and international entities. Detailed criteria for defining the typology of civil organisations can be found in Gurza Lavalle, Castello and Bichir (2007; 2008)

23 Moreover, in case the general configuration remains similar in both delimitations, a more robust picture emerges on the conditions of operations of the arguments, since it would show that the findings on the conditions of operation are not an artifact of the general structure of each network.
since representation by part of civil organisations often takes place before those political institutions.24

By and large, when comparing Mexico City and São Paulo, the two networks are similar, being large (n>>k) and sparse. In each city, the networks of civil organisations and the network of civil organisations and political institutions are very similar, although variations exist. The most salient variation, in both cities, when comparing those two networks takes place at the level of structural measures of centralisation – of degree and betweenness. Such information indicates that, when political institutions are included, in both cities the concentration of ties is increased in the network and in betweenness. However, the network of São Paulo is more concentrated as a whole, as indicated by the results of degree of centralisation and betweenness, as well as the fact that average geodesic distance is shorter than in Mexico City. As indicated, the network in Mexico City, in turn, presents more local density, regarding neighbourhood of nodes, as indicated by clustering and transitivity measures.25

Chart 6 – Civil organisation’s distribution of degree

24 In future works, we intend to include political institutions in the analysis of the arguments of representation to check the effect of those types of institutions on operation conditions of each argument.

25 Interestingly, networks in both cities are in accordance with the small-world proprieties, found in networks of totally varied nature (neural networks, electricity transmission, etc). In both cities (and in both delimitations), networks present high clustering and low average distances, and nodes in any pair are connected a few “steps” from each other, being part at the same time of relatively dense groups – characteristics that are typical of network in the small-world model developed by Watts (1999).
By analysing the distribution of ties in the networks26, we observe that – in accordance to our expectations – distributions that emerge in both cities points out to a exponential distribution, with few actors having several ties and vice-versa27. As can be seen in both cities, but more markedly in São Paulo, there is high concentration of ties in few nodes, and most actors have only a few ties. More: it is not possible to incorporate political institutions without incrementing the differences between both cities, showing that São Paulo-based civil organisations have higher capacity for mediation between their peers and their respective beneficiaries before public authorities.

In sum, despite sharing such general configuration, networks in Mexico City and São Paulo show some relevant differences. The latter’s is more concentrated as a whole, while the former presents more local density related to actors’ neighbours. Therefore, as pointed out above, general conditions for operation of representation by civil organisations seem more suitable in the case of São Paulo.

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26 In Charts 3 and 4, only completely connected networks were considered, that is, isolates were eliminated and only the higher components of the network that represent only 98% of the network were considered.

27 Which means that the networks have a similar shape to the scale-free model found by Barábsi and Albert (1999),
VI. Final Remarks

This paper had four expectations, related to the use of network measures to explore structural operation conditions for arguments empirically reconstructed from cognitive data. It also presented a wider expectation regarding the capacity for intermediation and representation of interests by civil organisations before public authorities. The aims of expectations were not causal, but rather methodological, and adopted in order to set up clear guidance and equal criteria for analyses of the networks. Operationalising those expectations led to diverse empirical results that still need to be assimilated and interpreted more carefully. Here we only summarise the findings seen as more relevant.

Regarding the arguments’ operation conditions, we have found that the identity arguments and, in a secondary position, membership and proximity are the most central in the case of São Paulo. It should be mentioned that identity and membership are minority in terms of how often they are invoked. In the case of Mexico’s capital the opposite takes place: the most oft-invoked arguments – others and services – are also the most central ones. Therefore the fact that an argument is often mentioned does not necessarily lead to better structural operation conditions for that argument and says nothing about its chances of being meaningful in terms of its consequences.

We found important contrasts between Mexico City and São Paulo. The most central arguments in the latter – identity and membership – are precisely those with the worst structural operation conditions in the former. We believe that such extraordinary prominence of the identity argument in São Paulo is associated to recent changes in Brazilian politics in terms of identity issues and affirmative policies. On the other hand, civil organisations that invoked dispersed arguments classified in the residual category “others” occupy more central positions in Mexico City; however, organisations classified in that category are in the less central positions in São Paulo. The fact that “other” occupies more advantageous positions indicates that, in the Mexican capital, representation practices by civil organisations are apparently less institutionalised and suffer lower demands to establish consistent legitimacy criteria than in São Paulo. The membership argument, in turn, although in opposed centrality positions in each of the cities, presents in both of them an important discrepancy between outgoing and incoming ties, with more incoming ones. We suggest that such imbalance points out a situation where actors do not find cost-benefit attractive incoming relationships to reward those ties, possibly because their position is more established and institutionalised and less dependent when exercising their representation on relations beyond their members. That is why we suggest that, despite contextual differences, there would be a logic of closure in that argument.

Finally, regarding structural operational conditions for representation by civil organisations as a whole, we found that both in Mexico City and in São Paulo civil organisations networks are concentrated, with few actors with many outgoing and incoming ties and many actors with few outgoing and incoming ties, similar to a power law distribution, in which the a few nodes posses a much larger number of degree than the average. However, the network of civil organisations in São Paulo is notably more centralised, which might indicate more favourable conditions for intermediation and representation of interests within civil society and before public authorities. We assume that the exercise of practices of political representation before public authorities by civil organisations
organisations is favourably associated to the presence of broad networks with capacity for internal differentiation and hierarchization. Such assumption seems to be corroborated by the fact that inclusion of political institutions in the analysis increased centralisation and concentration in the network of civil organisations in both contexts.
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