

**The *Gattopardo*¹ Era:
Innovation and Representation in Mexico in Post-neoliberal Times**

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Introduction

Over the last decades, the classic channels of representation, centered on the political parties and the labor unions, have been deeply transformed. The structural features of 20th century industrial societies have changed, among them, the Welfare State, mass democracy, the structure of the labor market and the modes of production that accompany these political projects. Along with them, drastic changes have occurred in the social cleavages that supported the labor unions and the mass –based parties (Gurza Lavalle & Araujo 2008, Manin 1997, Novaro 2000).

In this context, two new trends have developed. In first place, innovative democratic institutions have multiplied in Latin America and in the world, driving an expansion of representation (Smith 2009). Concepts such as deliberative and participative democracy, radical citizenship and post-

¹ The *Gattopardo* (in English known as *The Leopard*) was an Italian novel that tells the history of The Prince of Salina, a noble aristocrat who tries to preserve his family and class amid the tumultuous social upheavals of 1860's Sicily. In a well known dialogue a protagonist says: “if we want everything to remain the same, we need to change everything“. This novel became a symbol of the capacity to change the political surface without change the structure.

liberal democracy converged, at times contradictorily, in an attempt to understand processes aimed at the “democratization of democracy” (Santos, 2002).

The study field accounted for the existence of social-State interfaces (councils, committees, conferences, etc.), as mechanisms of collective participation, different from direct individual consultation in the form of referendums or assemblies. In this sense, the concept of participation itself has been redefined from the point of view of non-electoral societal control (Gurza Lavalle & Isunza Vera, 2010). In order to understand these phenomena, the majority of studies centered on these mechanisms (councils, committees, conferences, etc.), with an emphasis on case studies.

In second place, analytical approaches have been refreshed in order to examine the new types of relations that exist between the urban popular classes, political parties and unions. Based on research conducted in urban settings, these studies have suggested that there is a process of change in the organization of those classes. If in the past that relationship was based on a significant connection between labor unions and political parties (UP-Hub), today they are based on the pre-eminence of urban popular class associations (A-Net) (Collier & Handlin 2010).

In Mexico, a country that has been characterized by a slow democratic transition with resistant authoritarian elements, a more detailed analysis of these new trends needs to be carried out. To what degree have the recently established democratic innovation institutions influenced the expansion of the representation channels? Can we agree with the studies that speak about the replacement of the UP-Hub by A-Nets in the Mexican case? Is it possible to talk about democratic innovation in a country in which we can hardly talk about the consolidation of electoral representation institutions?

In this paper we examine the degree in which representation has expanded from a different perspective, that is, by shifting the focus of our observation, from case studies on councils and committees, to citizens and organizations. For this purpose, based on the results of two recent surveys, we use privileged information on contacts' networks that serve as intermediators to help access goods and services related to citizens' rights. The first is a survey statistically representative at a national and regional level, and for ten states, in which 11,000 questionnaires were applied to Mexican men and women over the age of 18. The second is a survey conducted among organizations in a "snowball format" in four states, within which three municipalities were selected (a total of 12) (see INE 2014).

Based on this work, the main objective of this paper is to identify which new and old elements, as well as mixed configurations, are present in the paths of intermediation which citizens and organizations turn to in order to access goods and services associated with rights.

We will argue that, on one hand, at individual level, the new interface institutions (councils, committees, etc.) seem irrelevant to the citizens, which would be in accordance with various research results that point to a "democratization from above" and a "limited participation" in the Mexican case (Isunza & Hevia 2012, Isunza & Mendoza 2013).

At this level, we will suggest that, in the *Gattopardo* style, the old ways change in order to reappear with new garments. In other words, the political parties, in spite of having been the object of countless reforms and being widely mistrusted by the population, appear to be the key elements when people look for intermediation. Also we will note that although the labor unions seem to be out of the picture in the eyes of the surveyed, no new associations have taken their place.

On the other hand, we shall also argue that, at the organizational level, the innovation institutions also seem to be irrelevant. In this context, the civil associations seem to concentrate on maintaining relationships within and among themselves and do not seek intermediation with parties or unions. Responses of the surveyed indicate that membership in these associations increases the probability of participation in non-electoral activities (protests, taking over public buildings, etc.), but not of having contacts for intermediation.

In general, we maintain that the important legislative work around the creation of tools for democratic innovation in Mexico has been implemented weakly. It is the political parties, an element of the old system of representation, which have re-adapted to the new times.

In order to develop these arguments, the paper is divided in the following sections: In the first, we present the conceptual and methodological tools on which we are based. The second presents the Mexican case in the recent Latin American historical context. The third section is devoted to analyzing the relevance of the democratic innovation institutions, in both the individual and the organizational surveys. The fourth section examines the “old elements“, especially the relevance of the parties in the area of intermediation at the individual level. In the conclusions, we evaluate the results obtained, with an emphasis on some of the implications that the Mexican case could have for a comparative study of the region.

A brief conceptual and methodological framework

In this work, the concept of intermediation is fundamental for understanding the expansion of the level of representation. In Gurza & Zaremborg (2013) we proposed that throughout a good part of the 20th century the literature developed a concept of double equivalence, i.e., between

legitimate political intermediation and political representation, on the one hand, and between the latter and the notion of representative government on the other.

This resulted in a reduction of representation theories, centered exclusively on the electoral sphere (Castiglione, Warren 2006; Gurza Lavalle & Isunza 2011; Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, Castello 2006). However, the world of representation was always wider and more diverse than that of electoral representation, although the latter has become the modality par excellence in representative government. The most notable exception in the 20th century was the functional representation via the unions, whether in its societal or state corporatist modalities (Schmitter 1992). Such double equivalence produced restrictive effects on the theories of political, non-electoral intermediation, prompting a persistent association between (non-electoral) intermediation and informal modalities of mediation, often, and not surprisingly, with negative connotations. Clientelism is the term that better condenses those negative characteristics (Auyero 1999). Also in this case, the practices of intermediation go beyond the simple reference to clientelism.

Thus, we are based on two assumptions: First, we do not consider that electoral representation exhausts all possible forms of representation and, on the other hand, we maintain that not everything surrounding electoral representation, even in its informal modalities, should be attributed to clientelism. In this context, a language centered on the concept of broad intermediation increases the possibility of understanding the diversity of representation paths that exist from the actors' perspective (Long 1997).

Based on the etymological meanings of the term intermediation, we define it as “being a way to” (a vehicle or a source) and, at the same time, “to be in the middle of” (being in between, in the exact measure). Intermediation refers to an activity that requires the capacity to measure with precision and, at the same time, to be the means for the creation of something new².

In this article, this definition relates to the measurement of contacts that act as intermediation links to goods and services necessary to access and guarantee rights (INE 2014). With this in mind, we begin by noting that relational capital is usually understood more in the sense of horizontal, rather than vertical ties (Smith, 2013, p. 1). The former allude to relations between individuals in symmetrical positions in a community. The latter refer to ties between citizens and persons in asymmetrical positions, as representatives of different areas, which are essential to access rights. At the individual level, we talk about intermediation when we refer to the various contacts mentioned by citizens as a way to access goods and services associated with rights.

At the organizational level, when we mention intermediation we are referring to a measure of centrality denominated *betweenness*, which is obtained by noting the number of times a node (an organization, actor, individual, etc.) is located in the shortest path between two nodes that are not connected with each other. This measurement allows us to identify an advantageous structural

² Scrutinizing the roots of the word we can distinguish its Latin source *medius*, a term that has two etymological roots. It refers to the Greek word *medeia* (literally: astute, ingenious, cunning). It is also related to the word *medal*, alluding to the one standing in the middle pedestal to receive a medal after a competition. On the other hand, the word is related to the word *meter*, which means portion (associated with a portion of land). This is also associated with the Greek word *medium*, meaning “a place where something grows or develops”.

position of an actor in the network compared to others, because of the possibility it offers to link actors that would not be able to connect with each other if this strategic actor did not exist³.

At the individual level, the *Encuesta de Calidad Ciudadana* (Citizenship Quality Survey), conducted by the National Electoral Institute (INE) included a special section of questions denominated “*generadores de nombres*” (name generators), which ask 11,000 people surveyed if they know any persons or “contacts” who can help them in different areas of resources associated with rights.

With each name generator up to three nicknames or initials were obtained, and then the respondents were asked to specify different characteristics of each person they had mentioned. 2

In addition, at the organizational level, a survey was conducted among organizations, with the objective of mapping the networks of associations in a certain geographical area. This sample was developed using the “snowball technique” in order to identify the most active civil organizations in each of the three municipalities (a total of 12), in the 4 selected states (Guanajuato, Veracruz, State of Mexico and the Federal District).

The Mexican Case: *Gattopardo* in the Post neo-liberal era?

The last decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century witnessed important processes of change in Latin America. On one hand, during the 80s and 90s most of the countries

3 Name generators 1 to 3 aim at measuring intermediation by asking for the initials or nickname of those contacts the surveyed recur to for: a) defending themselves against an injustice; b) gaining access to a politician, and c) presenting a project to the government. The surveyed were then asked to describe the characteristics of contacts in the list.

in the region underwent a democratic transition. On the other, in the context of economic constraints, they adopted reforms that deeply modified the limits between market and State.

This had a profound negative impact on inequality indicators, as well as resulted in a sharp decline in the quality of attainable rights for wide sectors of the population. As a reaction to the negative effects of these structural reforms, in the first decade of this century voters in various countries elected presidents who, with varying degrees of radicalism, are on the left side of the political spectrum (Venezuela, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia).

In this context, Mexico stands out by not following this trend. The literature on democratic transitions has difficulties in classifying the Mexican case, especially since the regime changes in this country were not the result of socio-political or economic collapses caused by either internal or external factors. Neither does the Mexican case fit into the category of transitions produced by elite pacts (see O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, Linz 1990).

In general, authors concur in situating the Mexican case in what they call a “prolonged transition” (Einsstand, Loaeza 2004, Labastida & López Leyva 2004), referring to a process of gradual change in “trench warfare” style, between groups in power and opposition parties, so that changes are produced by “marching and countermarching” (Schedler 2001). This type of process occurred repeatedly over a long period of time, which some say went on from the 1960s to 2000.

Therefore, after a 70- year rule, it was only in the year 2000 that the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) (Institutional Revolutionary Party) lost the presidency in a competitive

election, to the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) (National Action Party). After the PAN held the presidency for twelve years, during which time democratic conditions and human security issues rapidly deteriorated in the country (Espinoza & Monsiváis, 2012; Buscaglia, 2012a and 2012b), in 2012 the PRI won the presidential election and returned as the ruling party.

With its return to power, several institutions, which were fundamental during that prolonged transition, were modified again. In this new context of reactions and countermarches the already fragile Mexican democratic institutions are rapidly becoming weaker⁴. A new pact between the three main Mexican political parties, the PRI, the PAN and the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD), has installed reforms that tend to reinforce guarantees for the political elite. While it cannot be said that a hegemonic party system was reinstalled, it is possible to argue that these oligopolistic agreement between the main political parties has deteriorated the quality of the democratic contest.

Looking at the socio-economic changes that occurred from the 1980s to this day, we can discern that Mexico is a peculiar case in this aspect too. The 1980s were known as Latin America's "lost decade", with an annual average growth of only slightly higher than 1% , and public finances weighed down by foreign debt.

⁴ We refer here especially to the reform of the *Instituto Federal Electoral* (IFE) (Federal Electoral Institute), which was turned into the *Instituto Nacional Electoral* (INE) (National Electoral Institute), through which some powers were taken from the states and centralized at the national level; also, the reform that allows the reelection of congress members, senators and municipal presidents, as well as the various reforms that created numerous entities with autonomy, but with a doubtful capability of implementation.

Towards the beginning of the 1990s, pressured by their situation of debt to international financial institutions, Latin American countries accepted the conditions codified in the “Washington Consensus”, and implemented far-reaching reforms that followed the principles of privatization, decentralization, and focalizing goods and public services, thus redefining the borders between the public and the private spheres.

Mexico was not alien to this process. However, in contrast with other Latin American countries that implemented “radical reforms” (fast paced and far-reaching), Mexico is usually classified as a “cautious reformer”, meaning reforms are partial and implemented gradually (Stallings & Peres 2000). Especially during the Presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), goods and services (like telecommunications) were privatized, and property rights were liberalized (like those prohibiting the sale of communal, or *ejidos*, farm land). In addition, the rate of informal labor increased and minimum wages deteriorated, further weakening the labor unions, which had been the main source of support and loyalty to the PRI before the 1970s (Temkin 2009, Bensusan 2009).

These reform processes continued slowly during the conservative PAN’s period in government. Throughout both of its 6-year terms, the PRI exerted pressure from the opposition to stop the reforms. Paradoxically, the same PRI, upon reoccupying the president’s office, pushed to advance those same reforms, beginning with the new law regarding the oil industry⁵.

⁵ This law needs the support of other laws. A debate is going on these days around the proposed New Law of National Waters, which, from some perspectives, seems likely to favor the advance of private fracking initiatives.

While the rest of countries in the region, after decades of structural reforms, are moving towards a phase that came to be known as “post-neoliberal”, in Mexico, in contrast, this process develops with a different logic and timing. We could say that following a fragile democratic situation, Mexico faces a new onslaught by monopolistic economic sectors, which have found a lending ear in a political leadership ready to further liberalize economic aspects of the market and delimit the State’s role.

In this context, an analysis of the new, old and mixed configurations regarding the broadening of representation in Mexico must carefully take into consideration this situation of gradual changes and persistent elements of the old system.

A look at the new: Institutions of participation at the individual and organizational level

In 2000 the possibility of a PRI comeback seemed remote. When this party left the executive office after 70 years in power, it looked like a point of no return. In this context, civil society organizations acquired a certain importance (Olvera 2003)⁶. It was expected that during Vicente Fox’ Presidency (2000-2006), there would be a drive for the development of a new relationship with civil society.

However, although there were some accomplishments, the general picture was mixed. According to Hevia (2012) and Insunza & Hevia (2010), during Fox’ 6 -year term, several systems established by previous legislation were preserved, including the *Consejos de Planeación Democrática* (Democratic Planning Councils) in all states and municipalities, as well as political

⁶ That same year, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)*, (the National Liberation Army) triumphantly arrived in Mexico City and the Congress was discussing bills arising from the San Andres Agreement.

consultative councils in areas such as education, social participation and sustainable development.

The first PAN government formalized and refined the rules and regulations regarding these councils and created others in various policy areas, including on issues such as gender equality, sustainable rural development and strengthening civil society organizations⁷.

The transformation of the Solidarity Committees, which were part of the Ministry of Social Development during Salinas' government, deserves a special note. As mentioned in various studies, these bodies had been designed to support the creation of a new grassroots base for the PRI (Cornelius, Craig, & Fox 1994; Ziccardi 2004).

Thus, it is understandable that this structure was dismantled and replaced by another, which enabled mostly an individual type of relation between the State and poor populations who were the recipients of cash transfers from the *Programa Oportunidades* (Program Opportunities), also dependent on the Ministry of Social Development⁸. As a whole, it can be said that during that period the prevalent attitude toward "civil society" was elitist, and associated to the "Third Sector" concept, whose mission was conceived as a support for social entrepreneurial projects and as the outsourcing agent targeted to carry out programs initiated by the government.

The following 6-year term, after the most hard-fought elections in Mexico's recent history (2006), the new President from the PAN, Felipe Calderón, started off his mandate with a serious

⁷ Such as the Technical Consultative Councils mandated by the Federal Law of Encouragement of Civil Society Organizations, advisory and social councils within the National Women's Institute, the Program of Social Conversion in the National Institute for Social Development (See Hevia 2012).

⁸ It should be mentioned that this program also established consultative, participatory and comptroller's functions in the form of councils and committees. However, they carry significantly less weight than those held by the Solidarity Councils.

legitimacy question. Shortly after taking office, he declared a “war against drug-traffic”, which triggered a security and humanitarian crisis that continues to this day (Escalante 2011). In 2008, an economic crisis ensued, made worse by the commercial dependence on the United States. Within this climate of crisis, Calderon’s government also pushed for the creation of democratic innovation mechanisms, mostly at the discourse level. One of the main strategies of the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan) 2007-2012 was the establishment of citizens’ participation councils in various areas of federal policies.

In 2008, after compiling and analyzing 253 federal laws, 131 operational rules, the list of transparency obligations of the *Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información* (IFAI) (Federal Institute of Access to Information) and secondary sources, Hevia, Vergara-Lope & Ávila (2011) found a total of 227 collegiate institutions. This is no small number of democratic innovation mechanisms in Mexico, considering their normative presence at the federal level.

With these findings in mind, the question is: To what degree are these new bodies “real”, in the framework of efforts to broaden the scope of representation channels from the point of view of citizens and organizations?

An initial examination does not leave much room for optimism. In the INE Survey (2014) there is practically no mention of these new institutions. The only significant allusion refers to the *Asociaciones de Padres de Familia –APF* (Parents’ Associations). A relatively high percentage of Mexicans (19%) declared being active participants currently, or having been in the past, in these associations in the framework of their children’s schools.

This is a high percentage, if we take into account that the highest degree of participation (21%, according to INE 2014) is in the framework of religious organizations. However, the Parents’

Associations are not precisely new. As mentioned before, according to Zurita (2011), they are part of the normative tools contained in the *Ley General de Educación* (General Education Law) approved in 1993, based on the 1992 *Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica- ANMEB* (National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education), during Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government. This law also established *Consejos Escolares de Participación Social -CEPS* (School Councils of Social Participation).⁹ This author points out that the expansion of APF and CEPS is due to the fact that they are a pre-requisite to receive other government funding. In addition, she found that their actual functions are limited.

This data is consistent with evidence provided by other researchers, who note that the implementation of a substantial part of democratic innovation institutions in México has not evolved towards a significant increase of citizens' representation. While the obligation to establish councils as a pre-requisite to receive or implement other programs is not necessarily reproachable, the evidence tends to show serious difficulties in extending these practices towards a broader citizens' involvement or increased government openness in pursuit of planning and accountability (Caire 2011, Caldera 2013)¹⁰.

The weakness of these institutions in the eyes of citizens raises the question of whether it would be more useful to examine their relevance at the level of the organizations surveyed. However,

9 The APF (Parents' Associations) are essentially bodies that represent the school children's parents vis-à-vis the authorities, regarding various educational interests (article 67, Ministry of Public Education 1993). In contrast, the CEPS have "an inherent democratic vocation that enables society's intervention in actions aimed at strengthening and increasing the quality and range of education (article 69, Ministry of Public Education, 1993)". (Zurita 2011:142)

10 It should be mentioned that some policy areas show relatively more substantive progress in this scenario. We can point out especially the activity of councils related to environment policies put forth by SEMARNAT (Ministry of Environment) and those related to gender equality (Zaremborg 2012, Hevia 2012).

once the organizations' relations' networks have been mapped the situation is still discouraging. When asked with whom they were in contact (to obtain information, take decisions, etc.), the leaders of those organizations only mentioned three "mixed instances" (as councils, committees, etc. were called in the survey), from a total of 479 mentions.

The weak presence of democratic innovation institutions among the mapped organizational networks is also consistent with the evidence provided by other studies. Based on a survey of council members of social-State institutions at the federal level, Isunza & Hevia (2012) found that the most frequently mentioned functions were consultation (37.7%) or program execution and operation (30.6%). They also found that in 69% of the cases, council members were appointed or invited by the government entity in charge, and that the vast majority (86%) consider that the internal composition of the council does not adequately represent the non-governmental sectors (Isunza & Hevia 2012:12). Based on these findings, the authors emphasize that the creation of these institutions follows a "top-down" process, from the State to society.

Furthermore, on the basis of 39 institutions defined as "Non-Electoral Democratic Controls", Isunza Vera y Mendoza point out that 2 out of 3 institutions have been created by the State and that the vast majority (7 out of 10), play a consultative role, which concurs with a model of "delimited participation" in the context of a "democratization from above" (Insunza & Mendoza 2013: 470).

If the institutions of democratic innovation are not relevant to the organizations, then, what other actors are? As was shown in the survey, the organizations mention mostly other organizations,

either in the first, second or third tier¹¹. Does this speak about a new configuration regarding the associations' networks? To what degree could new actors be replacing the old in the context of intermediation in Mexico? These questions lead us to the next section.

Examining the old: The role of political parties as intermediators for access to citizens' rights

It is worth exploring the degree in which old main actors in the area of relations between popular sectors and the State (PU-Hub) are still relevant, or not, at the level of interests' intermediation, or whether the new organizations' networks (A-Nets) are today's main actors.

In this respect, the results of the survey at the individual level are conclusive. Political parties, in spite of being among the organizations which arouse the highest level of mistrust (over 80%), are the key element to increase the probability of having contacts of intermediation to obtain goods and services related to rights.

By using a multinomial logistic regression model we tested three sets of theoretical-causal factors, in order to understand the effect on the dependent variable constructed as the degree of relational capital for intermediation, measured in three options: no contacts, one contact, and two or more contacts, for the first three name generators.

¹¹“First-tier volunteer associations” were the most numerous supra-type (n=161). This category includes popular, neighborhood and community associations, as well and neighbors' committees. Their singularity lies in that their members are also the beneficiaries of their actions. The “second- and third-tier volunteer associations” (n=133) include those whose members are neither beneficiaries nor objects of their actions. They work for the benefit of third parties (NGOs, social centers of research and others: second-tier), or in favor of other associations (third-tier: coordinators and networks).

The first causal set includes *structural* variables such as gender, educational level and income. The second set comprises variables related to factors that we call *political-instrumental*. These refer to party membership, participation in electoral campaigns and knowing someone who received money or gifts in return for his/her vote. Finally, a third set includes variables relate to what we call *cooperative altruism*, i.e. trust in others and participation in volunteer organizations.

Our hypothesis was that the third set of factors, which are closer to the characteristics of an organizational network (A-Nets), would have the highest probability of increasing the individuals' relational capital. However, that was not the case. The results show that all the variables associated with party and electoral participation are consistently the more relevant factors. For reasons of space, we will focus here mainly on this result, while briefly mentioning the variables related to the structural and the cooperative altruist sets.

Thus, when a person states s/he is currently an active member of, or has belonged to a political party in the past the probability of not having any relation is notably reduced by 14 percentage points.

Table 1
Probability of having an intermediation contact by party membership

Party member	Has never been a party member	Member	Difference	
No contacts	0.68	0.54	0.14	**
One contact	0.22	0.28	-0.06	**
Two or more contacts	0.10	0.18	-0.08	**

Source: Self elaboration

** Level of Trust 95%

At the same time, those who collaborated in activities prior to and during electoral campaigns have a higher probability of having intermediation contacts for access to rights. When compared to someone who doesn't participate in electoral campaigns, the probability of not having any contact is reduced by 17 percentage points; the probability of having one contact increases by 7 percentage points, and by 10 points of having two or more. This tells us that collaboration in electoral campaigns is a key factor for increasing the probability of having relational capital for access to rights.

Table 2.

Probability of having intermediation contacts according to collaboration in electoral campaigns

Participation in political party activities	Never participated	Has participated	Difference	
No contacts	0.68	0.51	0.17	**
One contact	0.22	0.29	-0.07	**
Two or more	0.10	0.20	-0.10	**

Source: Self elaboration

** Trust level: 95%

In the case of “knowing someone who receives money or gifts in return for his/her vote”, the probability of not having any contact is reduced by almost 9 percentage points. In addition, the probability of having one contact increases by 3 percentage points, and to have two or more increases by 6 percentage points.

Table 3.

Probability of having intermediation contacts according to “knowing someone who receives money or gifts in return for vote”

Knows someone	Doesn't know/hasn't received	Knows/has received	Difference	
No contact	0.68	0.59	0.09	**
One	0.22	0.25	-0.03	**
Two or more	0.10	0.16	-0.06	**

Source: Self elaboration

** Trust level: 95%

Having established that party membership and participation in electoral activities are important for increasing the probability of having intermediation contacts, we can ask ourselves: What is the most convenient party to belong to in terms of having such relations? Probability effects show that the probability of remaining isolated is lower when the party of affiliation is the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)* – 4 percentage points less compared with no party membership. Furthermore, with a trust level of 95%, belonging to this party increases the probability of having two or more contacts.

Table 4

Probability of intermediation contacts according to party identity

Party Identity	None	PAN	Difference	PRI	Difference	PRD	Difference
No contact	0.68	0.65	0.03 *	0.64	0.04 **	0.68	0.00
One	0.22	0.24	-0.02	0.24	-0.02	0.20	0.02
Two or more	0.10	0.11	-0.01	0.12	0.02 **	0.12	-0.02

Source: Self elaboration

*90% trust/**95% trust

In contrast with the relevance of all variables associated with the political instrumental set, in the second causal set, income level is the second most important variable. The probability of not having any relations is lower for people with a higher income. That is, they are less likely to be isolated. The highest income level reduces the probability of not having any contact by 12 percentage points, compared with the lowest income level. It also increases the probability of having one contact by 10 percentage points, and of having two or more contacts by 3 percentage points. In conclusion, people with a higher income have a higher probability of having contacts.

Examining the behavior of the variables related to party and electoral participation in people with low and high income regarding the probability of having contacts, we discovered that not being close to a party environment has more severe consequences for low-income citizens, in terms of the relational capital available for intermediation. In other words, when both high-income and low-income people are not party members, or have not participated in electoral campaigns, the probability of being isolated is higher for those with lower income.

Lastly, the findings regarding the set of cooperative-altruist factors were surprising. Being involved in an association increases the probability of having two or more contacts by 5 percentage points, compared with non-involvement. In comparison, the effect of belonging to a political party, in terms of the probability of having intermediation contacts, is much higher than membership in an association. Additionally, the results show that trust increases, albeit slightly, the probability of having intermediation contacts. When someone goes from trust to mistrust, the probability of being isolated increases only by 3 percentage points.

After the analysis of the role of political parties at the individual level, we looked into the role they play at the organizational level. Here, it is useful to use the “centrality measures” (Freeman 1977). We will focus on two types of these measures: those called *degree* --both active (who the surveyed mention -*outdegree*), and passive (who is named by others, *in-degree*) --as well as those called *betweenness*.

Regarding the *degree*, political parties are generally mentioned most often but, as it will be explained below, they lack the capacity for intermediation. This suggests that political parties are a necessary or convenient contact for the civil associations, although they lack importance. The reason is that the “most central” actor, as indicated by being **directly** mentioned (*degree*), is not always the most relevant in other connotations. To better understand the role of certain actors as mediators, other measures of **indirect** centrality must be added to the analysis, i.e. the level of *betweenness* --which refers to the capacity of an actor to serve as a “vehicle”, a “bridge”, an “articulator”, or a “broker”-- to other associations and/or parts of the network that are not directly related to each other. Technically, it refers to the number of times a node (organization, actor, etc.) appears in the shortest (geodesic) path between two nodes that are not directly connected to each other.

With the single exception of one municipality, civil society associations show the highest capacity for intermediation in the sampled municipalities’ networks. A few actors outside the civil organizations also have the capacity for intermediation in the places studied, e.g.: church (in one municipality) and work associations (in two places).

In other words, political parties are frequently mentioned as nodes of destination when seeking information, resources, etc. (*in degree*, passive centrality), but are not strategically powerful in

terms of connecting organizations not directly related between each other. The role of intermediation toward the world of ties with which there is no direct relation is held by the organizations themselves, with a higher preponderance of those in the second- and third- tier. The organizations seem to be guarding that strategic role for themselves.

On the other hand, the 68 corporative organizations of the labor world, which are 18% of the total of 479 organizations in the survey, are not profusely mentioned as the target of ties sent or received (they don't have high levels of in degree or out degree), and neither are they relevant at the *betweenness* level.

It is interesting to mention that another logistic model applied to data from the same survey¹² focused on identifying the factors that could explain, not intermediation, but non-electoral participation instead (especially protests, marches, taking over public buildings, etc.). Here, we found that membership in both corporative and civil society organizations, is the most important factor that increased the probability of non-electoral participation. We leave this interesting data as an exploratory hypothesis to be studied in the future.

In light of our findings to date, two different fields of action appear to take shape in the area of representation. On one hand, in the world of individual citizens, a connection with parties is vital to achieve intermediation as a means of access to rights. Here, the relation with the old corporative actors is not significant. In Mexico, the political parties have adapted to the changing circumstances of the last decades, while the corporations, especially labor unions, have lost relevance in their role as interest intermediaries, and also as a source of party loyalty.

12 See Chapter 4 INE (2014), by Fernanda Somuano

On the other hand, based on the organizational analysis, the civil associations appear to be concentrating mostly on themselves, especially in relation to intermediation within their own organizational environment. In addition, when we see that participation in those organizations increases the probability of non-electoral participation in protests, complaints and other activities, the previous statement acquires a new sense. It speaks of two different games. One is about the connection to the electoral sphere, and the other is related to the repertoire of protests. These two coexist, overlapping each other, and settling into different roles assumed by new and old actors.

Conclusions

The work carried out until now shows results that might seem strange to those accustomed to associating legislative reforms with real change. On one hand, the Mexican case exhibits a profuse creation of social-state interface institutions, in the context of what has come to be known, in Latin America and the world, as democratic innovation.

However, when analyzing the relevance of these mechanisms in terms of intermediation to concretely guarantee the attainment of goods and services related to citizens' rights, neither the individuals nor the organizations report that they have achieved a significant relevance. There are only a few exceptions in this scenario, but they fail to meet the expectations of building a stronger democracy that arose at the time of shift of power in the 2000 elections.

On the other hand, the replacement of PU-Hubs by A-Nets, which was praised as a new form of interest intermediation for popular classes in Mexico, does not resonate in an articulate way either.

While the evidence shows a disengagement of political parties from labor unions, one can observe that those parties, were not replaced by civil associations, and they are still a key element for increasing the probability of having intermediation contacts. This is doubtless the most important change reflected in this study. Political parties connecting directly to the citizens in the territories and are leaving out union ties as the most relevant pattern to obtain electoral adhesion. Parties no longer go through labor unions in pursuit of a loyal grassroots (as was the case during the hegemonic rule of the PRI in the 1950s), but they do it through local contacts instead.

On the other hand, the civil organizations emerge as withdrawn, not engaged in individual citizens' intermediation but, at the same time, involved in participation in non-electoral activities, such as demonstrations, marches, taking over public facilities, etc.

In summary, this work shows that, in the Mexican case those reforms related to democratic innovation are still far from becoming significant. While it would be an exaggeration to say that nothing has changed (especially we can see changes at the level of the Mexican party system and the new oligopolistic pacts), it wouldn't be far from the truth to assert that, as in the play *Il Gattopardo*, much has changed but, structurally, nothing has changed too much.

At this point, we can say that, in principle, the analysis of the Mexican case seems to differ from the image obtained for other countries where, in the area of democratic innovation, the evidence shows that social-state institutions do play, somewhat, a relevant role.

For example, a recent study shows that over 20% of organizations mention those institutions in Sao Paulo, Brazil (Gurza Lavalle & Bueno 2012). In Uruguay, a recent study discovered that those mechanisms have been installed in at least half of the municipalities, and only a few municipal presidents disregard them as an option in the present or in the future (Cardarello et al 2010).

Beyond the main substantial criticism, the cases of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador cannot be conceived without the existence of committees and councils (Zaremborg 2012, 2013). In this context, again, the Mexican case is elusive. At the same time, the relevance of organizational networks (A-Nets) with new factors of representation of the urban classes seems to suggest more elements of change in other countries, than those we found in Mexico.

While the balance obtained for Mexico doesn't seem to correspond to the state of democratic innovation in other countries in the region, some aspects relating to the obstacles faced by Mexico could be retaken as questions for a comparative study in the future.

So, if the evidence about the relevance of innovation institutions seems to be more conclusive at the organizational level in different countries in the region, how and to what degree have the new social-state institutions and associations' networks (A-Nets) gained relevance from the common, individual, citizens' perspective?

What explains the endurance of old actors, like political parties and labor unions, in defiance of their announced demise? In what manner have they wrapped themselves in new forms of representation, and to what point has this contributed to neutralize or, on the contrary, to promote democratic innovation in the region? These are some of the questions deriving from the Mexican case, which could contribute to a future comparison with other countries in the region.

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