

Claims-Making as Representation for Disenfranchised Groups *

Didier Ruedin
University of Neuchâtel
didier.ruedin@unine.ch

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Abstract

Political representation lies at the core of many questions of political science and political behaviour. Studies commonly focus on formal channels of representation, namely on electoral representation by political parties and governments. Saward (2006, 2010) stresses performative aspects of political representation and regards representation as claims-making beyond the common insistence that representatives *act for* those represented. It follows that other organizations can represent groups in society, and such representation can be legitimate. Civil society organizations may play a special role in representing the interests of disenfranchised groups. This paper provides an empirical assessment whether such non-formal representation takes place in a systematic and consistent manner, focusing on immigrants as a (largely) disenfranchised group. A large-scale claims analysis is used to explore the question of representation through claims-making. I find that civil society organizations make many claims about immigrants that would affect them positively. In this sense, civil society organizations can be said to represent immigrants substantively. Representation via claims-making occurs more often when there is a need: in contexts where there are more restrictive policies in place. This is particularly true for immigrant groups without formal representation,

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such as asylum seekers. Opportunities to make claims – approached via political opportunity structures – by contrast do not seem to influence the claims made by civil society organization. By representing disenfranchised groups, civil society organizations may play an important role in increasing the legitimacy of democratic systems.

1 Introduction

Political representation lies at the core of many questions of political science and political behaviour. It is related to questions of political trust (e.g. Juenke and Preuhs, 2012; Maia, 2012; Ruedin, 2012b), participation in formal and informal politics (e.g. Bauer, 2012; Alexander, 2012), the legitimacy of democratic regimes (e.g. Hupe and Edwards, 2012; Montanaro, 2012), or even questions of social cohesion and societal conflicts (e.g. Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino, 2007) or health and development trajectories (e.g. Swiss et al., 2012) to name but a few areas of research. Although there are many ways in which political representation can occur, formal electoral representation by legislatures and governments are by far the most common forms studied. In this case, political representation is established by citizens electing representatives in the legislature or government. However, interests are not static entities that are ‘out there’ to be represented: Political representation is about the relationship between the population and the representatives with both sides being active actors. Saward (2010) highlights these performative aspects of political representation and that representatives make representative claims. Representation thus goes beyond the common insistence that representatives *act for* those represented (e.g. Pitkin, 1967).

The perspective of representation as claims-making has not replaced more static approaches to political representation. This may be because the commonly studied electoral representation in legislatures and governments plays a special role, not least because of its official character and relatively wide participation on behalf of the citizens. In free democracies, these two aspects alone provide electoral representation with legitimacy. Another reason may be that applications of representation as claims-making may not always be apparent; a more static approach may often be sufficient to study a particular question of political representation. It is important to stress, however, that political representation cannot be reduced to the formal channel of electoral representation. There are informal channels of representation, which may play an important role in representing otherwise unrepresented – or under-represented – groups in society (Montanaro, 2012; Celis, 2012).

Representation through claims-making is one such informal channel, and that it has been argued that this form of representation could be used legitimately (Montanaro, 2012). Existing studies, however, do not examine whether such informal representation through claims-making is used systematically and consistently. This paper fills this gap by examining political representation through political claims-making in the news. It focuses on immigrants as a (largely) disenfranchised group, and civil society organizations as political actors representing this group. Special attention is paid to the representation of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, because for these immigrant groups the status as disenfranchised group is more readily apparent.

2 Background

Political representation is a central aspect of modern democracies. There are different forms of representation (Pitkin, 1967), but the underlying principle of equality of citizens applies to all of them. Normative theory insists that the preferences and interests of the entire population are equally considered. This means equal rights, but also having an equal voice and representatives that are responsive to all members of society Verba (2003). In all modern democracies some groups are excluded from participation in electoral politics, usually by means of citizenship (Gosewinkel, 2004), but also specific groups like prisoners (Birch, 1971). With relatively large immigrant populations, countries in Western Europe may breach a basic principle of representative democracy.

However, there are alternative channels of representation beyond formal electoral politics (Celis, 2012). Indeed, Bird (2012) argues that different forms of representation should not be studied separately – symbolic representation may be as important as descriptive representation, for instance. Indeed, individuals and organizations can play a fundamental role in political representation, even outside the formal realm of electoral politics and without having the authorization of an election or formal nomination (Maia, 2012). They do this in informal channels by claiming to represent the interests of certain groups – be that women, ethnic groups, the poor, immigrants, or future generations. Montanaro (2012) argues that such self-appointed representatives can form constituencies on the basis of affected interests. Indeed, this kind of constituency forming is increasingly important in a world where issues are not bound to geographical (constituency) boundaries (Dovi, 2011); the increasing importance of informal representation may simply be a reflection of contemporary reality. Montanaro (2012) concludes that self-appointed representatives can legitimately further

the interests of groups, especially if the affected groups are empowered by the representatives.

Saward (2010) makes explicit that like formal representation, informal representation involves claims to represent. He draws similarities between politics and arts, highlighting the claim to represent a particular group or interest. Claims are likened to pictures of whom we are and where we are going – presented as policy alternatives. The meaning of these claims, according to Saward, depends on the audience, and the claims need to be acknowledged. In this point, he echoes Rehfeld (2006) and the insistence that authorization through elections is not always sufficient to ensure legitimate representation. Legitimacy also comes from the fact that representatives are acknowledged as representatives. For Saward representation is thus a dynamic relationship, not a state of affairs. Such a description of representation as claims-making is consistent with Pitkin's concept of descriptive representation as *rendering* (Piscopo, 2011), although there are other aspects to descriptive representation than identities. Indeed, Severs (2010) highlights that we should not overlook responsiveness when talking about representation as claims-making (see also Rehfeld, 2006, 2009, 2011; Mansbridge, 2003, 2011).

It is common to insist on representatives *acting for* those they represent, certainly in the context of electoral representation. What exactly this entails is open to debate, but Uhlaner (2012) highlights the aspect of *potentiality* introduced by Pitkin, yet often overlooked. Potentiality is the feeling of members of society that their interests would be defended by their representatives should these interests be threatened. This is a subjective idea, but clearly applies to informal representation as much as formal representation. It is conceivable that certain groups in society have more trust in say civil society organizations than party politics in defending their substantive interests. Seen this way, non-elected leaders and organizations may be just as important than electoral politics, given that individuals may identify with interest groups and other non-elected organizations seen to defend their interests. On the other hand, we cannot assume that members of the same group necessarily defend the interests of the group – women representing women, immigrants representing immigrants, and so on – (Weldon, 2008), although descriptive representation may increase the chances that these interests are represented (Mansbridge, 1999).

Although the perspective of representation as claims-making draws on contributions of cultural representation (e.g. Hall, 1997), it is fruitful to rely on research on social movements and its approach to claims-making (Koopmans et al., 2005; Severs, 2012). A claim is defined as a public statement on policy. It involves a claimant – the individual or

organization making the statement –, but also a group about whom the claim is made. Claims can be negative, neutral, or positive, depending on how they would affect the group in question would they become reality. They also draw on a justification or argument – the frame (McAdam et al., 1996; Benford and Snow, 2000). These frames reflect the pictures of society outlined by Saward (2010).

The argument made in this paper is as follows. First, it is assumed that civil society organizations choose to represent disenfranchised groups. This representation takes place through claims-making and is of informal character. There is no authorization by the disenfranchised groups – and these groups may lack the means to make public their approval or disapproval of the representation outlined. Legitimacy in this case is derived from the acceptance of other political actors that civil society organizations represent those whom they claim to represent, and from civil society organizations furthering the interests of disenfranchised groups (Montanaro, 2012). Immigrants are taken as an example of a disenfranchised group, given that they are generally excluded from participation in electoral politics.¹ The disenfranchisement is more evident if we focus on asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Second, it is argued that the representative activities of civil society organizations are affected by certain circumstances. Civil society organizations can be expected to be more active in claims-making if there are more opportunities, and if there is a greater need for representation. These two influences will shape the degree to which civil society organizations make positive claims about immigrants – and thus represent immigrants substantively.

The following hypotheses can be derived: H1 – *Civil society organizations make predominantly positive claims about immigrants.* This is the basis of substantive representation, and we expect high proportions of (positive) claims. Political opportunity structures and differences in immigration-relevant policy offer two avenues for explaining differences in the extent to which such claims-making takes place. H2 – *The proportion of (positive) claims by civil society organizations on immigration is higher where political opportunity structures are open.* We expect a positive correlation between these factors. H3 – *The proportion of (positive) claims by civil society organizations on immigration is higher where immigration policies are more restrictive.* In this case, there is more need for representation, and we expect a negative correlation. H4 – *Civil society organizations make relatively more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants than about immigrants in general.* Once again, there is more need for representation,

¹Immigrants may be able to participate in electoral politics in local elections, and certainly after naturalization.

and we expect high proportions of (positive) claims. H5 – *Civil society organizations make relatively fewer claims when immigrant groups make more claims.* In this case, there is less need for representation, as immigrant organizations represent their own interests. We expect a negative correlation.

3 Methods

Political representation is approached using claims-making in the news. A claim is observed if an actor – an individual or usually an organization – makes a public statement on policy. Usually a claim includes a statement about how policy should be changed in the view of the claimant. By focusing on claims in the news, claims-making can be captured in a systematic manner. Obviously not all claims are reported by the news, but it is assumed that to a large extent only claims reported by the news are politically relevant.² This said, claims reported in the news do not necessarily – in fact not usually – originate in the news, and indeed not all news have the same influence on politics (Smidt, 2012).

A large claims-analysis of newspaper articles is used, covering over 10,000 claims on immigration and integration in 7 countries (Austria, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) and over 15 years (1995–2009; Berkhout et al. (2012), see Berkhout and Sudulich (2011) for a full description). This content analysis allows a comparative approach and includes different kinds of political actors that may be relevant for representation: governments, political parties, civil society organizations, and the media. In each country two major newspapers were sampled on random days within the period covered; in Switzerland and Belgium four newspapers were sampled to cover the major linguistic areas adequately. To cater for potential differences in news coverage, both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers were sampled.

This paper focuses on civil society organizations as claimants, and two definitions of civil society organizations are considered. The reported results draw on the first specification, although as a test of robustness, all analyses were also run with the second specification; no substantive differences can be found. The first specification counts the following as civil society organizations: ‘civil society, charity, and social movement organizations’, ‘anti-racist organizations and groups’,

²Strength for this assumption is also taken from the finding that until very recently on-line campaign events appear to have remained without measurable impact on voter turnout (e.g. Cantijoch et al., 2012).

‘pro-minority right and welfare organizations and groups’, ‘general solidarity, human rights and welfare organizations?’³, ‘racist and extreme right organizations and groups’, ‘radical left organizations and groups’, ‘other types of civil society, charity, and social movement organizations’, and ‘minority organizations’. The second specification *additionally* considers religious organizations as part of civil society: ‘religious organizations’, ‘Protestant organizations’, ‘Catholic organizations’, ‘Islamic organizations’, ‘Hindu organizations’, ‘Buddhist organizations’, ‘Jewish organizations’, ‘Orthodox organizations’, and ‘other religious organizations’.

A range of variables is considered as potential influences on claims-making by civil society organizations. Political opportunity structures are captured with a scale considering the effective number of parties (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979; Taagepera, 1997), the seat share of anti-immigrant parties in the lower chamber, and the vote–seat proportionality. This scale was tested among many indicators of POS (Ruedin, 2011a; Ruedin et al., 2012) for robustness, and to capture (subtle) changes over time. Anti-immigrant parties were identified on the basis of party manifestos and expert placement (compare Ruedin, 2013). Immigration policies are captured using the MIPEX indicators, which were expanded backward over time to 1995 (Niessen et al., 2007; Huddleston et al., 2011; Ruedin, 2011b). A new indicator on asylum policies was added to complement the MIPEX data. Claims by immigrants and the level of politicization were drawn from the claims-making data set. An issue is considered politicized if it is salient – there are many claims made about immigration and integration – *and* polarized – both positive and negative claims are made. Salience is captured as the proportion of claims in a particular country made in a given year; the measure of polarization is based on Van der Eijk’s measure of agreement (Van der Eijk, 2001; Ruedin, 2012a). Politicization is calculated as the product of salience and polarization. Changes in immigrant population, finally, are calculated from a comparative dataset of immigrant demographics (Morales et al., 2012).

Three sets of models are run to examine the influence of these factors on claims-making. First, the proportion of claims made by civil society organizations as part of all claims made on immigration and integration is used as a dependent variable. Second, the proportion of claims by civil society organizations that are positive are examined. Here positive claims by civil society organizations are contrasted by

³Due to an oversight, this particular group was included in the analysis presented in this paper. Claims by racist and extreme right organizations will be removed in future versions, even though they are responsible for only very few claims, and their inclusion does not affect the substantive results presented here.

neutral and negative claims by civil society organizations. In the actual models, the dependent variable was transformed to cater for the negative skew in the data: $y' = \exp(y)$. Third, the proportion of claims by civil society organizations about asylum seeker and illegal immigrants is taken as the dependent variable. To cater for the positive skew in the data, the dependent variable was transformed: $y' = \sqrt{y}$. Ordinary least-squares regressions are used. To begin with, however, binary associations are reported.

4 Results

Civil society organizations need to make positive claims about immigrant groups if they can be said to represent immigrants substantially (H1). Table 1 outlines the proportion of claims made by civil society organizations that are positive, neutral, and negative respectively. It is immediately apparent that most of the claims made by civil society organizations are positive. Typically over three quarters of the claims made by civil society organizations on immigration are positive. The basis for substantive representation is thus given; and this is the case for all countries and years under study.

	AT	BE	CH	ES	IE	NL	UK
Positive	80.7	80.4	81.1	85.2	79.5	69.4	75.6
Neutral	12.3	12.1	5.7	8.0	10.1	27.3	12.8
Negative	6.9	7.5	13.2	6.8	10.4	3.3	11.6

Table 1: Percentage of claims by civil society organizations that are positive, neutral, and negative in seven countries.

While civil society organizations make many positive claims on immigrants, there is variation between countries and across years. Political opportunity structures are frequently invoked to describe the environment in which social movements and political actors more generally operate. In some contexts civil society organizations may find it easier to make positive claims about immigrants. For this reason, a positive correlation can be expected between the proportion of positive claims on immigrants made by civil society organizations and the openness of political opportunity structures. No such correlation, however, can be found; neither when countries are pooled ($r = 0.01$, $p > 0.1$), nor when looking at the association within each of the countries under study ($|r| \leq 0.19$, $p > 0.1$).

Instead of looking at the opportunities to make claims on behalf of immigrants, we can look at the need to make such claims. The

need to make claims is defined as restrictive policies on immigration – measured by MIPEX scores. The expectation is a negative correlation between MIPEX scores and positive claims made by civil society organizations. Given the comprehensive nature of the MIPEX indicators, there are four ways to test this expectation. We can look at the overall MIPEX score: an indicator of how liberal immigrant policies are considering many aspects. We can also look at specific policy domains, namely policies on asylum seekers, policies on political participation, and policies on discrimination. These three policy domains are likely areas in which there is a need for civil society organizations to make claims, as they affect disenfranchised groups. Looking at the overall MIPEX score, there is no statistically significant association ($r = -0.12$, $p > 0.1$), although the sign is as expected. The correlations involving specific policy domains are all negative, but only the correlation on participation is statistically significant ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$). Looking at the same associations within countries, none of the correlations is statistically significant, although most of them are negative as expected ($p > 0.1$).

The need to make claims can also be approached by differentiating immigrant groups. To this end, I draw a distinction between claims about immigrants in general, and claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. By virtue of their status, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants have no formal representation, and civil society organizations may fill this void. By contrast, immigrants are more likely to have some form of formal representation, be this by naturalized citizens or through participation at the local level. On the one hand, we can therefore expect civil society organizations to make more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants than immigrants in general. This is generally the case: In 60 per cent of cases, civil society organizations make more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants than immigrants in general. On the other hand, we can formulate the stronger expectation that more than half of the claims civil society organizations make on immigration concern asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Recall that besides these two groups and immigrants in general, there are other immigrant groups, such as labour immigrants or immigrants from the European Union. This stronger test is not usually met, but in 57 per cent of cases, more than half the claims made by civil society organizations are about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. This indicates that civil society organizations do not specialize in making claims on behalf of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, but may do so as part of wider concerns with equality and human rights, for example. Taken together, however, there is strong evidence that civil society organizations represent disenfranchised immigrants

groups, particularly those without formal representation.

This tendency to represent immigrant groups that are clearly characterized by lack of formal representation holds for most countries under study (table 2). The only country that does not follow the pattern outlined is Spain, where civil society organizations do normally make more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants than about immigrants in general. The strong association with claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants is particularly strong in Austria and Ireland, two countries where asylum politics are relatively highly politicized (Ivarsflaten, 2005). In these two countries, in many years civil society organizations make more than half their claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. This is the case for 33 per cent of the years in Austria, and 47 per cent of the years in Ireland. In the other countries, this is the exception.

	AT	BE	CH	ES	IE	NL	UK
Fewer claims	26.7	40.0	40.0	83.3	20.0	46.7	33.3
More claims	73.3	60.0	60.0	16.7	80.0	53.3	66.7

Table 2: Percentage of years in which civil society organizations make more (less) claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants than immigrants in general.

Civil society organizations make claims about immigrant groups and can therefore be understood as representing these disenfranchised groups. It is equally conceivable that immigrants and explicit immigrant organizations represent immigrants through claims-making. Looking at all countries jointly, we observe a statistically significant association, although opposite than expected: The more immigrants make claims, the more civil society organizations make claims about immigrants ($r = 0.6$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the more immigrants make claims, the more civil society organizations make claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants ($r = 0.2$, $p < 0.05$). This pattern is clearly against the expectation, and would suggest that political opportunity structures play a role – despite the fact that no association between opportunity structures and claims-making for immigrant groups could be determined above. However, when considering the position of claims, there is no significant association between immigrants making many claims and civil society organizations making positive claims about immigrants ($r = 0.08$, $p > 0.1$). This supports the view that the outlined positive correlations are picking up something about the ability to make claims about immigration in the media, not the content of these claims that constitutes substantive representation.

The situation is similar if we look at individual countries (table 3). We observe strong positive correlations between migrants making more claims and civil society organizations making more claims. There is only one statistically significant correlation in table 3 that corresponds the expectation outlined: For the Netherlands we observe more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants by civil society organizations when immigrants make fewer claims.

	AT	BE	CH	ES	IE	NL	UK
More claims	82.8	75.9	65.0	58.7	76.2	56.5	69.4
Asylum/Illegal	24.8	-9.7	-28.7	38.8	12.1	-42.6	28.0
Positive claims	11.4	48.1	35.9	36.5	19.8	-48.9	30.8

Table 3: Correlation between claims by immigrants and civil society organizations. All correlations in the top row are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$); in the middle row, the negative correlation in the Netherlands is significant at the 0.1 level, while none of the correlations in the bottom row are statistically significant ($p > 0.1$).

4.1 Multivariate Models

Given the expectation that both supply and demand – opportunity and need – are expected to affect claims-making by civil society organizations, multivariate regression models are in order. The first set of models focuses on civil societies making more claims about immigrants (table 4). The proportion of claims about immigrants is the dependent variable. In the first model – the base model – neither of the main explanatory variables is statistically significant. In the additional models, immigrant policies (MIPEX) are positively associated with civil society organizations making more claims about immigrants and immigration, although substantively this effect is negligible. The indicator of political opportunity structures is never significant neither statistically nor substantively.

Models 2 and 3 introduce additional explanatory variables. Although significant, the sign of the coefficients is *contrary* to the expectation. It does not appear to be the case that in years when immigrant populations grow more, civil society organizations make more claims about immigration – assuming that there is more opportunity to make such claims, given the salience of the issue. Instead, the models clearly indicate that in years where the immigrant population grows more, other actors are more likely to appear as claimants in the news. The variable on the politicization of immigration captures similar aspects

Table 4: Making claims about immigration

	Claims by CSO		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
POS	0.007 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.006 (0.003)
MIPEX	0.001 (0.001)	0.001* (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)
Population Change		-0.201** (0.084)	-0.127* (0.070)
Politicization		-0.312*** (0.095)	-0.147* (0.081)
Migrant Claims			1.980*** (0.598)
MIPEX * Migrant Claims			-0.023** (0.011)
Constant	0.114** (0.047)	0.171*** (0.047)	0.025 (0.059)
N	105	105	105
R-squared	0.043	0.163	0.456
Adj. R-squared	0.024	0.129	0.423
Residual Std. Error	0.098(<i>df</i> = 102)	0.092(<i>df</i> = 100)	0.075(<i>df</i> = 98)
F statistic	2.293(<i>df</i> = 2; 102)	4.866***(<i>df</i> = 4; 100)	13.717***(<i>df</i> = 6; 98)

*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$

of political behaviour, but it caters for the actions of political actors in drawing attention to changed demographics. Once again, the variable is significant, but contrary to the expectation outlined. Claims by immigrants are not in competition with claims by civil society organizations, but – as indicated by the positive coefficients in models 2 and 3 – reinforcing: In years when migrants make many claims, so do civil society organizations. The expectations outlined at the beginning of this paper need to be revised.

Model 3 includes an interaction term between immigration policies and the proportion of claims on immigration made by migrant actors (figure 1). Immigration policies (MIPEX) matter when the proportion of claims by migrant actors are low, but when migrant actors make many claims, immigration policies do not seem to affect how many claims civil society organizations make on immigrants. The negative coefficient is compatible with the argument that there is less need for representation when immigration policies are more liberal.

For substantive representation to take place, civil society organizations not only need to make claims about immigrants, but claims in

Immigration Policy * Migrant Claims (mcprop) Effect Plot

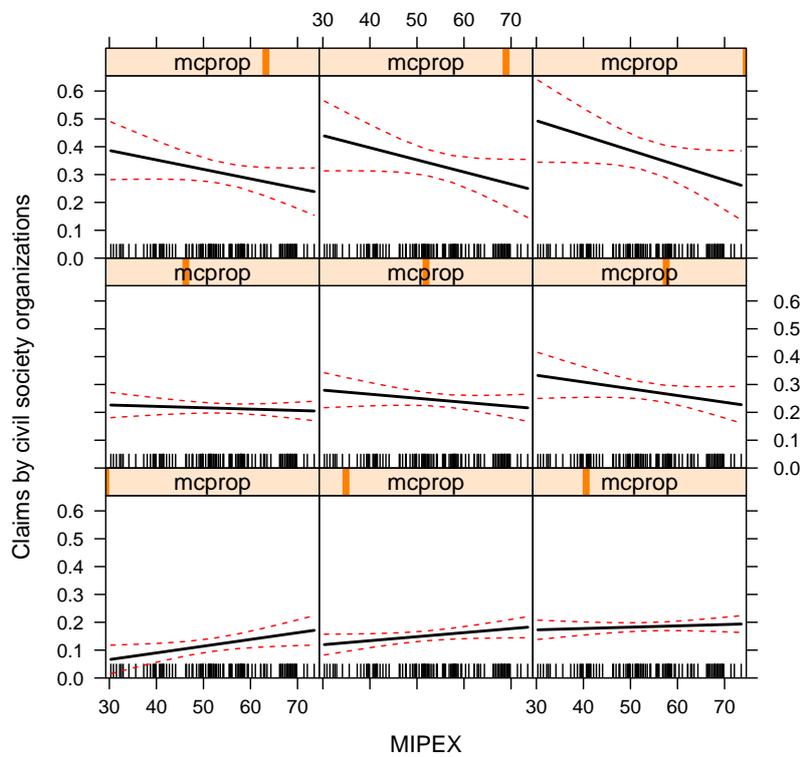


Figure 1: Interaction between immigrant policies (MIPEX) and the proportion of claims on immigration made by migrant actors (mcprop).

the interest of immigrants. These are positive claims, and the second set of models focuses on these positive claims (table 5). In all models, immigration policies are small significant contributors. In contrast to the first set of models, the sign of the coefficients is as expected – negative. Political opportunity structures, however, do not seem to make a significant difference. The third model highlights the interaction between immigration policies and election years. Liberal policies combined with election years increase the likelihood of civil society organizations making positive claims, but the coefficient for elections lowers the baseline substantially.

Table 5: Making positive claims about immigration

	exp(Positive Claims by CSO)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
POS	−0.004 (0.015)	−0.003 (0.017)	−0.003 (0.017)
MIPEX	−0.005* (0.003)	−0.005* (0.003)	−0.010** (0.004)
Politicization		−0.300 (0.390)	−0.328 (0.385)
Population Change		0.363 (0.417)	0.377 (0.412)
MIPEX * Election			0.012* (0.007)
Election		0.007 (0.080)	−0.642* (0.359)
Constant	2.519*** (0.173)	2.550*** (0.190)	2.779*** (0.224)
N	98	98	98
R-squared	0.030	0.044	0.079
Adj. R-squared	0.010	−0.008	0.018
Residual Std. Error	0.356(<i>df</i> = 95)	0.359(<i>df</i> = 92)	0.355(<i>df</i> = 91)
F statistic	1.466(<i>df</i> = 2; 95)	0.847(<i>df</i> = 5; 92)	1.297(<i>df</i> = 6; 91)

*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$

Asylum seekers and illegal immigrants are two immigrant groups of special interest, because they clearly lack access to formal channels of representation. The third set of models examines claims about these two immigrant groups (table 6). As in the previous set of models, the coefficients for immigrant policies are significant and negative – as expected. The second and fourth model consider the interaction between political opportunity structures and immigrant policies. Counterintuitively, it seems that open political opportunity structures are

a *barrier* for civil society organizations making claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Only where there are open political opportunity structures and liberal immigration policies do civil society organizations make more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. This finding is consistent across models and robust to the inclusion of additional variables in the fourth model.

Table 6: Making claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants

	sqrt(Claims about Asylum Seekers and Illegal Immigrants)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
POS	-0.002 (0.010)	-0.163* (0.094)	-0.002 (0.011)	-0.162* (0.091)
MIPEX	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.003)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.011*** (0.003)
POS * MIPEX		0.003* (0.002)		0.003* (0.002)
Politicization			-0.263 (0.262)	
Pop. change			0.017 (0.268)	
Election			-0.098* (0.052)	-0.103** (0.051)
Mig. Claims			0.685** (0.345)	0.771** (0.321)
Constant	0.815*** (0.118)	1.036*** (0.174)	0.878*** (0.127)	1.063*** (0.172)
N	102	102	102	102
R-squared	0.073	0.100	0.168	0.187
Adj. R-squared	0.054	0.073	0.115	0.144
Residual Std. Error	0.243(df = 99)	0.241(df = 98)	0.235(df = 95)	0.231(df = 96)
F statistic	3.911** (df = 2; 99)	3.638** (df = 3; 98)	3.192*** (df = 6; 95)	4.402*** (df = 5; 96)

*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$

Models three and four consider election years and claims made by immigrant organizations. As in the bivariate associations discussed above, the sign of the association is counter the expectation. It does not appear that civil society organizations are more active in countries and years where immigrant organizations are less active – responding to a need for representation. Instead, civil society organizations make more claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants in contexts where immigrant actors are also active in claims-making on immigration.

The robustness of the reported results was tested in a number of ways. First, a different specification of civil society organizations was

used – including religious organizations as civil society organizations, as outlined in the methods section. Second, all models were run controlling for country and year. This was done without clear expectation as to which country or year would differ, but as a blanket solution to capture unmeasured differences. For example, it is conceivable that country specificities other than immigrant policies and political opportunity structures affect the variables of interest. Similarly, unspecified external events or international linkages may mean that some years stand out in terms of claims-making by civil society organizations. The additional models suggest that this is not the case, and all results could be replicated in substantive terms.

5 Discussion

Political representation is often reduced to formal (electoral) representation. Recent contributions have highlighted that other forms of political representation exist, underlining informal channels and the claim to represent specific groups in society (Celis, 2012). The potential legitimacy of such claims to representation has been established (Montanaro, 2012), but the extent to which organizations make use of informal channels of representation remained unexplored. This paper demonstrated that civil society organizations in all countries under study are responsible for a significant part of claims that would positively affect immigrants. This claims-making takes place outside formal politics, and is evidence of substantive representation. Put differently, civil society organizations not only have the potential to represent disenfranchised groups, but in the case of immigrants they actively do so.

By examining the position of the claims made by civil society organizations, the paper differentiated between civil society organizations *talking about* immigration and civil society organizations *acting for* immigrants. The high proportion of positive claims is evidence that civil society organizations are able to give immigrants a voice in the political sphere, despite immigrants largely being disenfranchised. By representing groups in society that are otherwise (largely) disenfranchised, civil society organizations play a vital role in the political system. Their actions increase the representativeness of the political system and thus increase the legitimacy of the system. Recall that political theories insist on different groups being represented; there is no substantial requirement for such representation taking place within electoral politics.

By extension of the analysis in this paper, however, it follows that focusing on electoral politics is insufficient to understand political rep-

resentation. The actions of other actors need to be taken into account – from civil society organizations to lobby groups. Rather than seeing these additional actors as undermining the representative relationship between the population and legislators/government, civil society organizations and lobby groups should be seen as integral actors in shaping political representation. This can be positive by giving disenfranchised groups a voice – as outlined in this paper –, or negative by sidestepping formal mechanisms that ensure a certain degree of equity between voices: the mantra of *one person, one vote*.

The paper examined the situations in which civil society organizations are more likely to represent immigrant groups through claims-making. Political opportunity structures do not seem to affect claims-making by civil society organizations in a significant way. Instead, the need-based argument focusing on immigration policies and representation of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants proved more conclusive. Civil society organizations are more likely to make positive claims about immigrants if policies are more restrictive. By so doing, civil society organizations actively represent the substantive interests of immigrants. Indeed, civil society organizations make disproportionately many claims about asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. This highlights that civil society organizations play an important role in giving a voice to groups without formal representation.

By contrast, the relationship between civil society organizations and immigrant organizations proved surprising. Contrary to expectation, civil society organizations are not more likely to be active for immigrants where immigrant organizations are less active. Instead, there might be a reinforcing relationship: When and where immigrant organization are active in claims-making in the news, civil society organizations also tend to be active. Further research is necessary to understand this relationship, and to establish whether left-wing parties play a similar role to civil society organizations in representing immigrant groups – or disenfranchised groups more generally. Irrespective of this, civil society organizations substantively represent immigrants through claims-making in the news, increasing the legitimacy of the system by giving disenfranchised groups a voice in the political sphere.

6 Conclusion

This paper considered political representation through claims-making in the news. By so doing, the realm of representation was widened beyond formal electoral politics. Such informal channels of representation have been acknowledged in the literature, but the extent to which this

form of representation takes place remained mostly unexplored. Immigrants were used as an example of a (largely) disenfranchised group, and civil society organizations as actors substantively representing said group. Indeed, civil society organizations represent immigrants and their interests through claims-making. This way immigrants are represented in the political sphere, despite absence in formal politics. This is particularly the case for asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, two groups for which traditional electoral channels of representation are closed. Put differently, this paper demonstrates that alternative channels for representation exist to ensure substantive representation to some extent: Substantive representation of disenfranchised groups can and does take place despite absence in formal politics.

Democratic theory demands that all groups of society are represented, but it generally leaves it open whether this has to happen through formal politics. By widening the focus to include informal channels of representation, the picture of representation can change. On the one hand, disenfranchised or under-represented groups may be present in the political sphere by different means. On the other hand, the actions of actors such as lobby groups need also be considered for a full picture of representation. The ideal that all groups of society should be represented, and that everyone should have the same influence on political outcomes remains unchanged. By using a wider – more complete – approach to political representation, conclusions about the legitimacy of particular democratic systems or settings may have to be revised.

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