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“Political affairs”: brokerage relationships between state representatives and local politicians in Brazil*

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ABSTRACT

In Brazil, politicians at different levels cooperate to achieve electoral and governing goals. Recently, these relationships have come to be analyzed through theories of brokers developed in comparative politics. This article investigates the micro-foundations of alliances between state representatives and local politicians and asks to what extent those theories are adequate to analyze these relationships in Brazil. Our analysis combines data from surveys with state representatives and interviews with advisors and focuses on how alliances are built, maintained, and broken. We show that mayors and city councilors are important brokers for state representatives. However, the fact that legislators and local brokers do not hold static positions and play dual roles underscores the limits of principal-agent theories to describe and analyze these relationships. Based on our conclusions, we suggest pathways to advance our understanding of the dynamics of interest intermediation and the multilevel connections between political actors.

KEYWORDS: Brokers. State representatives. Local politics. Mediation. Multilevel connections.

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INTRODUCTION

In Brazilian politics, it is common for politicians located at different levels of the political system to cooperate among themselves to achieve objectives either in the electoral competition or in the governing arena. This cooperation can be seen in the alliances between legislators (state and federal) and mayors and councilors, which can be formal and restricted to the electoral period (the so-called *dobradas*¹) or informal alliances that go beyond elections. In this relationship, local politicians are usually seen as *brokers*, a term used in the literature to designate actors who mediate between politicians and voters.²

Several studies on the Brazilian case highlight the importance of the relationships between legislators and local politicians and the mediating role played by the latter (Bezerra, 1999; Avelino, Biderman, and Barone, 2012; Barone, 2014; Novaes, 2018). The general idea is that representatives serve and allocate resources to their geographically concentrated bases, and, in exchange, local brokers channel votes for the legislators. These studies generally rely on assumptions about actors' motivations and the observable outcomes of alliances, without providing evidence of the mechanisms that underlie these relationships. In this paper, we examine to what extent the theoretical framework used to analyze relationships between brokers and bosses in comparative politics is adequate to explain the relationship between legislators and local politicians in Brazil. To this end, we investigate how these relationships are built, maintained, and eventually broken, confronting our findings with would be predicted by theory.

To investigate these questions, we combined survey data with state representatives from twelve Brazilian states and evidence from in-depth interviews with state representatives' advisors. In this way, we sought to portray the relationships between state legislators and local brokers across a broad range of states and to identify the micro-foundations of these alliances and the mediation dynamics that characterize them. We do not intend to carry out a systematic test of hypotheses. Instead, this is an exploratory study, but one with the potential to reorient studies on the subject, insofar as it investigates the mechanisms underlying the relationships between legislators and brokers. Our main contribution is to point out theoretical and empirical pathways for this field of research. Our study also differs from the literature in another aspect.

¹ It refers to the practice of two or more candidates at different levels running an election campaign together, organizing and sharing costs, teams, and campaign materials (Hoyler, 2022).

² We will use the terms brokers, mediators, and political operators as interchangeable from this point on. These are analytical (and not native) categories used in the literature that highlight the position and role played by these actors.

We shift our attention from federal legislators, the target of most investigations on the subject, to state representatives, stressing similarities and differences.

In addition, our analysis draws attention to a different variety of brokers that is not highlighted in recent studies on the topic. Few studies in the recent comparative literature investigate the role that elective officeholders at the local level play as brokers (Stokes et al., 2013; Camp, 2015) or explore in depth their peculiarities. In general, tend they focus on party activists (Stokes et el. 2013), activists driven by political, ethnic, or religious loyalties (Aspinall, 2014), community leaders with or without party ties (Zarazaga, 2014; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015), and independent brokers hired to act exclusively in the election period (Muñoz, 2014).

Our analysis supports the idea that local politicians, namely mayors and city councilors, play the role of brokers and are important points of support for state legislators. We also observed that, in general, financial resources and assistance in solving problems with state agencies are the most valued aids (Bezerra, 1999; Meireles, 2019), but that councilors and mayors differ in their demands and in how they are met. Fulfilling their requests is the primary way in which representatives nurture the alliances and, in this sense, legislators' actions and their offices are predominantly reactive.

There are several ways to build partnerships, especially through friendships and geographical proximity. We show evidence that reputation is an essential element in the selection of brokers and that political parties matter more as potential veto points, depending on the configuration of local politics, than as criteria for structuring alliances. Our analysis also shows that the electoral payoff of partnerships for legislators is far from guaranteed. It involves many uncertainties and a significant effort to acquire information, negotiate, and establish priorities for assisting a local politician. Moreover, we concluded that electoral defeats are the main reasons for relationship break-ups and that representatives do not show a willingness to punish local brokers when they do not deliver what is expected.

While we do not question the importance of local political actors as brokers for legislators, our findings reveal the limits of principal-agent theories — the theoretical framework most commonly used to study this topic (Stokes et al., 2013) — to describe these relationships in Brazil, especially when brokers hold elective office and play a dual role. We find no support for the assumptions that there is an inherent conflict of objectives between brokers and bosses, or an informational asymmetry in favor of the former regardless of the context.

Based on our findings, we highlight the need to: (i) further explore the differences between local brokers who hold and do not hold elective mandates, and between state and

national representatives in terms of local ties; (ii) differences and connections between the dynamics of intermediation occurred during elections and those that go beyond the electoral campaigns; (iii) explore other methods of broker selection, besides parties (more commonly studied on the Brazilian case).

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN LEGISLATORS AND LOCAL POLITICIANS IN BRAZIL

Municipal and general (state/national) elections in Brazil take place alternately every two years: mayors and councilors are elected in 5,568 municipalities, and, two years later, it is the turn of state and national legislators, senators, governors, and the president of the Republic. While the executive heads at all levels are elected by a majoritarian system, legislators and councilors are elected by an open-list proportional system. In state and national elections, except for the presidential race, the electoral districts are the twenty-seven federation units. Even national representatives are elected in states, and their campaigns are organized at the state level.

The 1988 Constitution established municipalities' political and administrative autonomy, which increased the importance of local leaders, especially mayors. However, most Brazilian municipalities remain dependent on resource transfers from upper levels (Bremaeker, 2018). Their infrastructural shortcomings induce mayors to cultivate relationships with congressmen as a way to ensure the flow of resources and benefits to their localities and, consequently, pave the way to electoral success.

Several features of the Brazilian political system (such as the federative organization, electoral system, definition of electoral districts, separate elections, and concentration of resources at the central level) induce cooperation among local and state/national political actors, either in the period between elections or in the election period (Carneiro and Almeida, 2008). The literature in the electoral and legislative studies presents evidence that connections between local leaderships and representatives are an essential feature of Brazilian politics.

Several studies have already shown that mayors to cultivate links with state and national representatives to allow them to carry out investments in infrastructure and public works projects, which are taken as one main indicator of a good administration at the local level (Palmeira and Goldman, 1996; Bezerra, 1999). Moreover, mayors can exhibit these connections as a distinctive sign before voters, a symbol of power and prestige they can convert into benefits for the municipality (Chaves, 1996; Bezerra, 1999; Eduardo, 2016). Much of the congressmen,

in turn, would also be dependent on mayors to get credit for the delivered benefits, build a good reputation in their region and, consequently, win votes.

Ames, Baker, and Rennó (2008) present evidence that voters, to a good extent, choose candidates for the national legislature with local concerns in mind, and prefer those with a recognized ability to allocate resources to their localities. The electoral results of this mutual support were also designated by Ames (1994) as “reverse coattails effects”.

There is evidence that this cooperation brings electoral payoffs for both sides of the relationship. Avelino, Biderman, and Barone (2012) and Barone (2014) show that a victory in the mayoral election increases the parties' electoral chances for state and national offices. At the same time, Eduardo (2016) shows that an alliance with legislators increases the electoral chances of mayors, especially in small towns, and when voters believe that it will result in collective benefits for the municipality.

One of the main ways representatives can benefit their localities and local politicians is by allocating resources through pork barrel budget amendments, following demands from mayors and other local actors³. A second way is by providing their allies with information and access to government agencies (especially the Executive branch) and supporting them in solving bureaucratic problems (Bezerra, 1999; Carvalho, 2003, p. 152). According to the legislators, the volume of resources allocated to municipalities is the main criterion used by local leaders to evaluate legislators' performance (Bezerra, 1999). Bezerra (1999) reports that although representatives often express a negative view of the activities mentioned above, they justify the attention devoted to local affairs by the expectations of voters – an aspect corroborated by Ricci and Lemos (2011) based on surveys conducted with national representatives.

Literature on the Brazilian case has emphasized the role of parties in structuring these relationships (Bezerra, 1999). They show evidence that these organizations play a relevant role in maximizing results in different electoral rounds at different federative levels and that a victory in the mayoral election raises the parties' electoral chances in subsequent legislative elections (Fleischer, 2002; Carneiro and Almeida, 2008; Avelino, Biderman, and Barone, 2012; Novaes, 2018). In addition, there is evidence of party coordination in the budget resource allocation process that, in turn, would be crucial in the electoral arena (Baião and Couto, 2017; Meireles, 2019).

³ For an alternative view that problematizes the electoral return of the budget amendments, see Mesquita et al., 2014.

Most studies that address the relationships between legislators and local leaders focus on national representatives. Some evidence of the local brokers' importance for state representatives can be found in Castro, Anastasia, and Nunes (2009) and Melo (2011). Based on survey data from twelve Brazilian states, these authors show that many legislators value connections with local leaders and municipalities where they were well voted. They frequently visit localities, work to channel resources from budget amendments to the region, satisfy constituents' requests, and help mayors in their endeavors to solve problems with government agencies. They also show that a significant share of state legislators believe that the most critical factor for their reelection is their ability to send resources for their constituencies.

Recently, scholars started to address the relationship between local politicians and legislators in Brazil through a theoretical framework based on brokers (Eduardo, 2016; Novaes, 2018). By adopting this framework, the literature establishes clear foundations, premises, and observable implications of these relationships and inserts the phenomenon into the comparative politics literature. In the next section, we present the general outlines of what brokers are and how these intermediation relationships work according to such theories, as well as question their application to the Brazilian case.

THE DILEMMAS POSED BY BROKERS

In recent years, scholars of distributive politics and clientelism have turned their attention to brokers: people who mediate between politicians and parties on the one hand and voters and groups on the other. Brokers are seen as key actors to structure and maintain clientelist networks and, therefore, mobilize voters. According to some studies, their importance stems from their penetration in their communities, which gives them insider knowledge about voters' preferences. Therefore, they would be fundamental to define the best distribution strategies (what, who, when, how much to distribute) aiming at the highest electoral return (Stokes et al., 2013; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Zarazaga, 2016; Szwarcberg, 2015; Aspinall, 2014; Novaes, 2018).

Brokers are primarily unelected people who play some leadership role or has social or political capital that allows them to influence voters. However, they can also hold public office, usually at the local level. Their actions can extend beyond elections, when they take on a significant role in solving community problems (Auyero, 2001; Brierley and Nathan, 2021) and even in government tasks at the local level (Auyero, 2000; Zarazaga, 2014; Hoyler, Gelape, and Silotto, 2021).

While part of the literature sees brokers as party agents embedded in large and dense networks typical of political machines (Stokes et al., 2013), others argue that a more diverse profile of brokers can be found in more fluid and poorly institutionalized party systems (Aspinall, 2014; Muñoz, 2014; Mares and Young, 2016). Brokers might be driven by political, ethnic, religious, or territorial loyalties, guided by long-term material benefits, seek more immediate material rewards (Aspinall, 2014), or they can also be focused on the interests of their groups (Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015). Moreover, brokers might not have any ties to parties and organizations and behave as free agents, switching allegiances in the same election (Muñoz, 2014, Aspinall, 2014; Novaes, 2018).

With few exceptions (Auyero, 2000; Lawson and Greene, 2011; Finan and Schechter, 2012), this literature does not tend to give importance to the role played by friendship and feelings of gratitude, reciprocity, and obligation in the dynamics of political brokerage. These can be mechanisms for creating or enforcing relationships and antidotes against opportunistic or predatory behavior. In many studies, these relationships are seen as a market transaction, guided by instrumental calculations (Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes, 2003; Stokes et al., 2013; Zarazaga, 2014; Camp, 2015).

Principal-agent theories have been an important reference to analyze the relationships between brokers and bosses. Such theories are a common theoretical framework in Political Science, especially in works inspired by rational choice theory, to describe situations in which one actor – the principal – provides incentives for another actor – the agent(s) – to make decisions and pursue courses of action that are convergent with the principal's goals and interests (Gailmard, 2012), given the premise that there is a conflict of purposes between them. Therefore, in order to minimize agency losses and discourage opportunistic behavior and the defection of brokers, principals distribute rewards and punishments in the form of promises of career advancement, positions in the public sector, advantages for local allies in recruiting candidates, financial resources at election time, among other private benefits (Camp, 2015; Novaes, 2018).

An issue frequently addressed in these principal-agent analyses concerns the agent's responsiveness to the principal's objectives and how bosses select brokers and monitor their actions to ensure that they will act in their interests (Stokes et al., 2013; Aspinall, 2014; Gingerich, 2020; Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015). Many scholars assume that there is a disjunction between the interests of brokers and politicians/parties that presents risks for the latter concerning optimization and return on investment (Stokes et al., 2013). Thus, it is not enough for brokers to be recognized leaders in their communities. They also need to

demonstrate the ability to mobilize voters. The principal, for its turn, needs to find observable indicators to guide and monitor brokers' performance. Some of the indicators used by bosses are the number of votes delivered by brokers (Szwarcberg, 2012; Gingerich, 2020), attendance at campaign events (Szwarcberg, 2012; Muñoz, 2014), and the size of the networks brokers can build (Stokes et al., 2013).

The relationship between these participants is maintained as long as they are mutually beneficial. Some authors argue that the risk of brokers' disloyalty is higher in contexts of non-dominant clientelist parties in which none of them has exclusive access to state resources (Muñoz, 2014; Novaes, 2018). According to Aspinall (2014), in such a scenario, the chances of defection and predatory behavior increase as brokers seeking short-term material rewards predominate in the network. Other factors explaining brokers' loyalty are the volume of candidates' resources and their prospects for victory (Aspinall, 2014), levels of party identification among voters, and the existence of programmatic linkages between brokers and bosses (Novaes, 2018).

Turning our attention to studies on distributive politics in Brazil, we find evidence that: (i) voters incorporate local concerns in their voting decision which inclines them to choose legislators with a reputation for bringing resources to the municipality; (ii) a significant share of legislators strive to allocate resources and provide services to municipalities; (iii) local leaders, especially mayors, perform a significant role in winning votes for legislators; and (iv) allocating resources to municipalities brings electoral returns for both legislators and mayors.

However, the theories of brokers based on principal-agent models do not seem entirely suitable to describe brokerage relationships in which both parties hold an elected office and look for votes. The rigid assumptions they adopt – notably the existence conflicting goals between principal and agent (Gailmard, 2012) and informational asymmetry in favor of the latter – are not always valid for describing the relationship between Brazilian legislators and their local brokers. As we seek to show in the following sections, these relationships can take different forms, and there is no single possible equilibrium.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Unlike most studies on brokerage between officeholders in Brazil, which rely on quantitative analyses, we employ a multi-method approach in this paper. We integrate quantitative and qualitative descriptive evidence to answer the following questions: how are relationships between state representatives and local politicians constructed, maintained, and

ended? Do the principal-agent models that inform much of the analysis in comparative politics provide an appropriate framework to describe and analyze these relationships in the Brazilian case?

To identify broader trends in the relationships between state legislators and their brokers, we use data from the two waves of a survey undertaken by the Center for Legislative Studies (CEL/DCP/UFMG) in twelve Brazilian states⁴ with 513 state representatives in 2007 and 439 in 2012⁵. This data helps us reflect on what to expect from qualitative evidence. Although not nationwide (not generalizable to the whole country), it allows us to draw a broader picture for Brazil. In addition, we conducted ten in-depth interviews with chiefs of staff and advisors of nine state legislators from a single state. The interviews provide new evidence to the same research questions highlighted at the beginning of this section and which are also answered using quantitative data.

Rather than deriving assumptions about the actors' motivations and the alliances' expected outcome from theory, the interviews gives us a more comprehensive view of these processes and its unfolding over time. They enable us to identify the elements that underlie the quantitative evidence in the literature and illustrate their operating mechanisms (Martin, 2013). These elements refer to the perceptions and motivations of actors directly involved in constructing these alliances, which are hardly captured through surveys. Thus, to the extent that the interviews provide a more detailed description of how actors make choices, act, and react in their mutual relations, they can contribute to generating hypotheses and/or propose causal mechanisms (Martin, 2013; Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read, 2015).

One of the difficulties of interviewing method is related to the construction of the sample of interviewees and the resulting bias (Martin, 2013). Given that this stage's goal was to investigate the dynamics of building and maintaining these alliances, in our sample, we sought state legislators whose teams could contribute to find incidences of this phenomenon. We chose representatives (elected for the 2015-2018 legislature) who had at least 30% of their votes concentrated in a given region, given the assumption that legislators with more concentrated votes tend to present a more particularistic behavior (Carvalho, 2003). Supposing these

⁴ Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Ceará, Pará, Tocantins, Goiás, and Mato Grosso. Survey "Paths, profiles and interaction patterns of state legislators in twelve units of the Federation".

⁵ These figures correspond to a response rate of 82.2% of the total number of members in these assemblies in 2007 and 70% in 2012. Nevertheless, the persistence of general trends in the questions of interest to this paper suggests that we have sketched a reliable portrait of the legislators in these assemblies.

representatives would tend to lean more on local brokers, we expected to maximize the likelihood of accessing accounts of these relationships.

Nine legislators⁶ from the chosen state region⁷ met the above requirement. Six had been re-elected in 2018 for the 2019-2022 term, and three could not get re-elected. Given the impossibility of conducting interviews with advisors of two legislators, we replaced these cases with two legislators who had at least 20% of their votes concentrated in the region. A total of ten interviews were conducted, with nine chiefs of staff and one adviser of nine different state representatives.⁸ We chose to interview advisors and not the legislators based on the assumption that they would be more accessible and have a broader view of the mandate. From the ten advisors interviewed, only one worked in the regional office.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE ALLIANCES FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL?

The interviews revealed that mayors (prefeitos), local councilors (vereadores), former mayors, and former councilors, i.e., people holding or having held office, are the most valuable brokers for state legislators. The survey corroborates this result. When asked about relevant support for their electoral victory, the region's mayors are the second most important category in both waves of the state legislators survey. If we add up the first and second most relevant support, at least 30% of the interviewees in both waves of the survey said that the support of "mayors from their region" was one of the top two most important ones (36.5% in 2007 and 30.3% in 2012). This result converges with other studies that highlight the importance of mayors as local brokers (Mares and Young, 2016, Gingerich, 2020).

Our evidence also points out that city councilors are relevant supports, albeit less than mayors. Almost 24% of respondents in the 2007 wave said that support from local councilors was important to their victory (5.7% in the first, 18.3% in the second), and just over 18% did so in the 2012 wave (4.3% in the first, 14.1% in the second). In the aggregate, 50.3% of

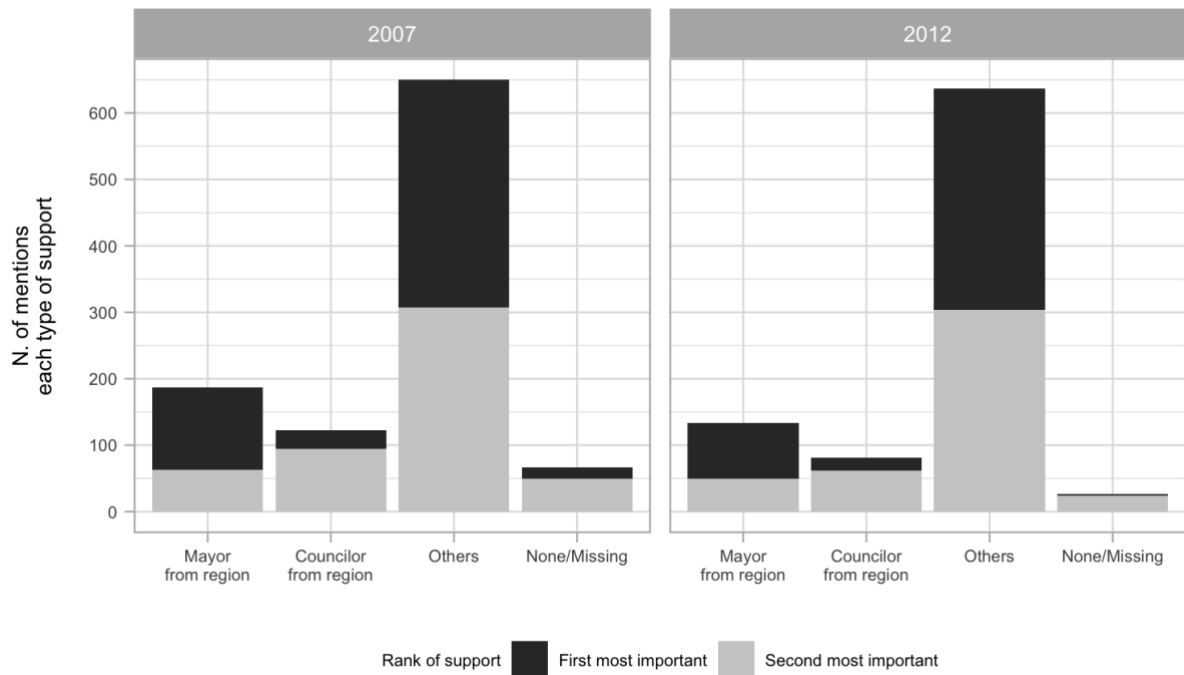
⁶ To preserve the informants' identities, we do not reveal the state or their names.

⁷ The reference region for the selection of cases is very representative of the state's reality. Appendix A provides more information about its characteristics.

⁸ The decision to conduct this second interview in the same office was due to the fact that the chief of staff had only been working as a parliamentary advisor for a short time.

respondents in 2007 mentioned mayors or councilors as one of the two most important endorsements. This figure was lower in the 2012 wave, 40.1%.⁹

Figure 1: Two most important supports for the election of state legislators



Source: prepared by the authors based on data from CEL-UFGM
 Note: each respondent is counted twice, because a legislator gives an answer for both the most important support and the second most important.

Considering the aggregate of representatives who cited mayors and/or city councilors as one of the most important supports for their election, there is some variation between states (Appendix B)¹⁰. In both waves, they are most cited in Bahia, Pernambuco, and Tocantins, and least cited in Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul, and Rio de Janeiro. Thus, despite the difference in their size, the pattern's stability between them is striking. Regarding parties (those with 10 or more members who were interviewed), in both waves the PT has a lower than average proportion of mentions to mayors and/or councilors, while DEM, PMDB, PP and PSDB have a higher than average proportion (Appendix B).

⁹ We do not explore the reasons for this difference. However, we point out that they may stem from modifications in the response categories despite the same question wording between the two waves, such as those discussed in footnote 11.

¹⁰ Despite the difference in magnitude, the general trend of mayors being mentioned more as the most important first support is evident in 2007. In 2012, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rio de Janeiro, and Rio Grande do Sul were exceptions.

However, in both waves, the category that appeared in first place in legislators' answers as the most important for their victory involved community leaders¹¹. This result contrasts with the in-depth interviews, in which current and former elected officials (mayors and councilors) received much more prominence than other types of leaders. This contrast is probably due to the difference in profile between the survey sample (with representatives with different profiles and spatial patterns of votes) and the interview sample, which focused on legislators with more concentrated votes.

An interesting element from the interviews and often overlooked by the literature is that "support from the municipality" is often not synonymous with "support from the mayor". Advisors refer to these supports as "representatives' municipalities" (*municípios do deputado*) or "our municipalities" (*nossos municípios*). Nevertheless, what defines whether or not a municipality is "the legislator's" is an aligned mayor or the support of a political leader, most often city councilors, former mayors, former councilors, people who have run or intend to run in the future. In other words, a legislator may include a municipality in her sphere of influence without necessarily having the mayor's support.

Advisors call their work on municipalities and with local leaders as "political affairs" ("trabalho político"), in contrast with other activities. All interviewees estimated the number of allied municipalities, and almost all of them showed us spreadsheets with the *legislator's municipalities'* list. Each spreadsheet was organized differently, but, in general, they contained the municipalities' names, number of votes given to the state legislator in the last election, and the reference broker's name (which could be the mayor, a councilor, a former mayor, a former councilor, or, more rarely, a community leader).

Except for one, all interviewees affirmed that the mayor's support was important in the legislator's last election. For most of them, mayors' importance as brokers stems from their visibility in the municipality, their political power, and their capacity to execute (as opposed to councilors, for example). To a large extent, mayors perform the role of gatekeepers, and their endorsement is important, sometimes necessary, for representatives to enter the municipalities, a finding that converges with those of Bezerra (1999) in his investigation on national representatives.

¹¹ The largest share (31.2%) of most important support among respondents in 2007 is from community or union leaders. After a slight change in the response categories (in 2012, the categories listed "the support of other leaderships in your region," while joining "the support of social and union movements," removing union leaderships from the response options), "leaderships in the region" was the largest share in 2012 (25.7%).

For most legislators, it is very important [the mayor's support]. Let's suppose that you are the mayor of [municipality], then I go there alone and ask for a vote: nobody knows me. People from the interior trust the mayors, the councilors, the leaders who talk about the legislator (Chief of Staff 2).

In two interviews, the lower importance of mayors was attributed, among other factors, to the legislator's relatively short career in the State Assembly (only two terms). On the other hand, there were two cases of representatives inheriting political capital – including support of mayors – from their parents who had previously been legislators. In addition, as already suggested by Novaes (2018), we found evidence that representatives who are in the opposition find it more challenging to keep their network of supporters due to a weaker access to patronage resources. When asked about the number of local brokers, an advisor from an opposition party said:

More or less 40 mayors and about 60 councilors and leaders. We used to have more. In the first term, we had up to 70, 80 mayors. Until the end of last year, we supported the governor, so we had a much greater access to state government resources (Advisor 1).

In some cases, legislators mix a regional approach, which is highly dependent on mayors and municipal leaders, with thematic activity or working with a specific sector. In the latter case, interviewees tended to give less importance to regional activities as well as to mayors as brokers. One of evidence from this lesser importance comes from a legislator who is active in defending a group's interests: she does not keep a regional office, and only has one paid assistant in her hometown.

The interviews show that it is possible to distinguish between two types of legislators. One is the policy-oriented, who devote more time and energy to lawmaking and institutional activities. The other prefers constituency service and attribute a great value to municipalities and local leaders, or, in terms of the interviewees, to the “political affairs”.

It is worthwhile to note the only interviewee who did not attribute importance to the support of mayors for the legislator's election: a second-term representative who focuses her activities on a specific policy area. This legislator most important relationships at the local level involve other actors, such as bureaucrats with managerial positions, NGO presidents, and entities that work in this same policy area. Her adviser also stated that their office uses social media intensely to publicize the legislator's actions, suggesting a deliberate effort to relieve or downplay the role of local politicians as mediators and establish a more direct relationship with voters.

It was surprising to note the importance attributed to city councilors both in the interviews and on the survey, given the little attention the literature gives to relations city councilors with actors outside the local arena. In our interviews, advisors emphasized the importance of councilors, especially in municipalities where a legislator “does not have the mayor”, and councilors can work towards winning (or recovering) the local Executive.

The legislator is very hierarchical; she has always thought that the councilor has to take her demands to the mayor, and the mayor has to bring them here. (...) But it doesn't mean, right, (...), that we don't assist the councilor. We do it a lot when the mayor is not ours. When the mayor is ours, it's unjustifiable to receive her here because it's like she's going over the head of the executive branch there (Chief of Staff 4).

We noticed a perception that demands from councilors are more diversified than mayoral ones, which, for the most part, ask for financial resources. Mayors tend to be associated with requests of a more general nature (although it is not uncommon for them to seek help in favor of groups and individuals). In contrast, councilors tend to act predominantly on behalf of individuals and social organizations (which they call “entidades”).

In non-election years, councilors mediate the allocation of resources to social organizations. Since this type of operation does not need to go through the mayor's office, they are essential in municipalities where the representative “does not have the mayor”, and the councilor can exercise the mediation independently. When a councilor resorts to the representatives for a more collective nature request, some articulation with the Executive becomes necessary, since they are responsible for the execution. In these cases, there may be a credit dispute, and a positive outcome depends on the mayor's goodwill. Nevertheless, most of the time, interviewees stated that this transaction occurs without major setbacks. After all, it is costly for mayors to decline resources and benefits for the municipality even when these come from the hands of an opposition councilor or political group.

We see, therefore, that brokers who hold elected offices are key supporters of state representatives. Most recent studies on brokers do not explore the distinction between elected and non-elected mediators. Hence, it is not clear to what extent their propositions and conclusions apply equally to those who hold and those who do not hold elective mandates.

Moreover, as we have already pointed out, these studies tend to rely on the assumptions of principal-agent models. In order to apply this framework, one should clearly identify who performs the role of principal and who performs the role of agent (Gailmard, 2012, p. 4). Our analysis shows that state representatives and brokers do not occupy static positions and move

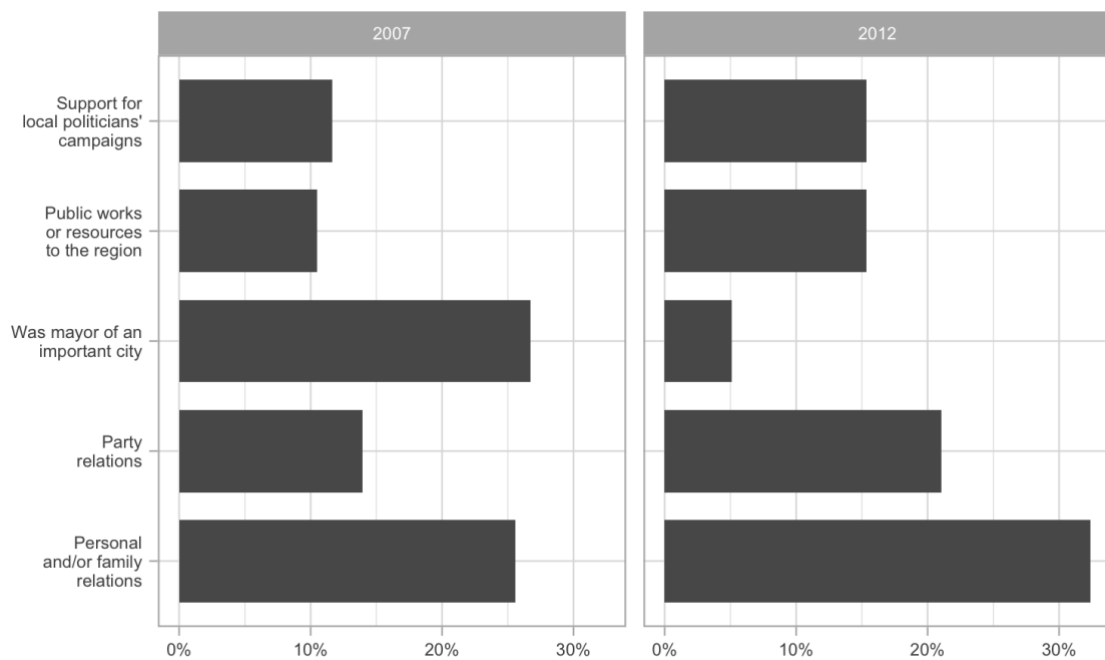
around in time and space, playing a dual role. As the boss, a legislator is the leading actor who expects local actors to act in favor of her electoral success. To encourage brokers, she provides incentives, such as assigning discretionary budget resources to municipalities and fulfilling mayors' and councilors' requests. In this position, she is subject to the risks inherent to this relationship. However, since mayors and councilors are also politicians with elective offices, a shift in time converts legislators from principals to agents, ready to mobilize voters in municipal elections. Another distinctive aspect of this relationship, not captured in most analyses, is that representatives need to mobilize voters to ensure the political survival of those who once acted as their brokers. In other words, the role of principal or agent is defined by the function exercised in this relationship, which varies in time and space and cannot necessarily be inferred by the position occupied in the country's elected-offices structure.

SELECTING BROKERS: HOW DO RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN?

In the previous section, we showed that mayors and local councilors are important brokers for state representatives and that, among other things, these relationships imply that legislators allocate resources to municipalities. This section explores how these alliances are established and how brokers are selected.

First, our evidence contests the idea that friendship and feelings of reciprocity are not important in relationships between legislators and local brokers. In the 2007 and 2012 waves of the survey, legislators' answers do not point to the predominance of one single factor to explain how they were able to get mayors' and councilors' support: personal and family relations stand out (25.6% as the main factor in 2007, and 32.4% in 2012), carrying out public works in the locality (26.7% in 2007) or channeling resources for the region (15.3% in 2012), party relations (14% and 21%, respectively) or supporting the campaign of mayors and councilors (11.6% and 15.3%). Thus, while the focus of recent literature has been on party relations, the scenario shown by the survey is more diverse.

Figure 2: “In the last election, what was the most important factor in getting political-electoral support from mayors and councilors?”



Source: elaborated by the authors from CEL-UFGM data.

Note: It considers only the respondents who declared any of these supports as one of the two most important support for their victory.

We also restricted the visualization to answers that received more than 10% mentions in at least one wave.

In the interviews, in turn, reference to friendship ties was frequent. Friend's networks seem to be important as a source of information, to start new relationships, to obtain donations for the campaign, but mainly as a stockpile of trust for cases in which one of the parties cannot deliver what is expected by her partner.

Nowadays, mayors and councilors always want resources for the municipality in a way that is a bit of a negotiation. They only commit to the legislator when she provides resources (...) We select carefully (...), we avoid this kind of person because we see that it is not going to be a lasting relationship. The [legislator] has this characteristic of bringing people together, those who are affiliated to the [party], those who have sympathy for the [party], and even for friendship (Advisor 1).

In discussing relations between representatives and local actors, scholars commonly ask to what extent party affinities structure alliances. In other words, the question is to what extent alliances occur primarily between co-partisans or involve any party coordination, so that brokers become party agents and alliances yield votes for the organization's politicians. As mentioned before, the Brazilian case shows evidence of partisan brokerage (Baião and Couto, 2017; Avelino, Biderman, Barone, 2012; Barone, 2014; Bezerra, 1999; Meireles, 2019).

However, the comparative literature shows that this is not the rule (Muñoz, 2014; Novaes, 2018), and that it is possible to find other types of brokers with no links to political parties (Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015).

Notwithstanding the low levels of party identification and the personalization associated with its open-list proportional representation, it is unlikely that parties do not play an important role in the Brazilian electoral process. After all, political parties remain the exclusive channel for running for a public office, and control vital resources in the electoral process – funding, political advertising time on television and radio, and other organizational resources. Moreover, it is natural that studies should focus on party labels, since it's an easily available variable.

However, our evidence suggests that political parties may not be the only element structuring alliances, nor even the major. Thus, we refocus our efforts not in understanding whether party affinities matter, but under what conditions they lose in importance to other factors (which are less trivial to measure, but count when choosing partners and forming alliances). In the in-depth interviews, chiefs of staff were unanimous in stressing the little or no importance of political parties in building local alliances. In general, they tended to say that the representatives have alliances with leaders of various parties and that affiliation is not the most crucial criterion. One could object that this is due to the profile of the legislators we focused on in our interviews (votes concentrated in adjacent municipalities). But, even in the survey conducted with a wider range of legislators, only a minority (14% and 21% of the interviewees, in 2007 and 2012, respectively) pointed out party relations as the most important reason for obtaining mayors' and councilors' support.

We argue, therefore, that the party is not the main factor to structure brokerage networks, but it is one (among others) that puts them in motion. Moreover, the interviews suggest that political parties can work as veto points, depending on the municipality's political configuration. Political groups' strength in the local arena and their degree of polarization can convert parties into elements that hinders or prevents alliances between local politicians and legislators.

Among the interviewees, the selection of brokers seems to follow a more regional criterion and may occur through different paths and in a very informal way. In the case of mayors, for example, an alliance can start with the mayor's initiative to reach out to a legislator, making a request and proposing a partnership. This occurs, for example, with "orphan mayors" who are "without a legislator" ("*sem deputado*") due to a broken relationship or because the candidate who the mayor supported failed to get elected. Mayors from the same region and adjacent municipalities speak to each other: a mayor recommends a legislator to another, or an

orphan mayor seeks information with a mayor from a neighboring municipality. Some interviewees said that when a new mayor approaches them, they seek information about her, sometimes from their former allies, which shows the importance of reputation in building alliances and suggests a kind of *ex-ante* control at the early stages of a relationship.

In politics, we know everything: the most correct person, the most dedicated, who really works, who doesn't work. What if she loses? Or if she can't run for office? So it never stops, we have to do the serious work right after the election (Chief of Staff 9).

Our interviews suggest that offices can work to serve those who have cast votes and shown loyalty in the past, as well as those who may deliver votes in the future. A legislator may use this forward-looking strategy when she intends to expand her influence to other regions. Although this is not the rule, a representative may take the initiative to gain a new ally by allocating resources to a locality without the mayor's request and without her commitment to support the representative. The chief of staff and other advisors also work to attract new allies, using their professional or personal connections to link the representative to mayors and local political groups.

Selecting brokers and maintaining relationships seems to be a diverse and dynamic process. Our interviews suggest at least three distinct dynamics. Some historical partners remain loyal for a long time due to past collaborative work and personal affinities. In these cases, partnerships may endure even when the legislator feels disappointed with the number of votes cast in the municipality or when the mayor's requests have not been fully met. There are short-lived, circumstantial partnerships that end up being broken because one side feels disappointed by the partner's lack of commitment or because some shift in the local political context. The absence of other strong ties – regional, friendship, affinity, shared past experiences – makes it less costly for both parts to break this relationship and search for new allies. The short-term evaluation of fulfilled requests and delivered votes weigh in this case. Finally, there are uncertain partners, a mayor or local councilor who has received a benefit but about whom the legislator does not feel secure about. These are alliances that advisors tend not to include in their accounting of expected votes. They enter as “extras” that may or may not materialize.

This is a very important municipality for us. The mayor is not 100% ours. She is in her second term, and she is going to support a great leader of the municipality who is from her group, very dear to the town. She is not even affiliated with [the legislator's party], but she is already committed to [the legislator]. One year in advance we start planning for the following year. Of course, everything can change during the elections, but we are betting on it and

allocating resources to it. The mayor, being a good friend of her's and ours', although already committed to another legislator, opened the doors of the municipality (Councilor 1).

The last line expresses the uncertain nature of some alliances and the fact that legislators are often making a risky bet, an aspect also registered by Bezerra (1999). Therefore, our evidence suggests that partnerships between representatives and local brokers may suffer from adverse selection problems similar to those that characterize principal-agent relationships. The participants' information gathering, learning, and reputation are essential elements guiding the choice of partners (Gingerich, 2020). However, it is not only those who play the role of bosses who are subject to these risks. Local brokers also take the initiative to form partnerships and seek information to increase the odds of a fruitful alliance.

NURTURING THE LINKS: MEETING LOCAL DEMANDS

Once the broker is selected, and the link is established, how do the participants act to preserve it? How do requests and deliveries occur in practice? Are state representatives able to evaluate brokers' performances? Does this evaluation effectively influence the decision of whom to serve and how?

Our interviews suggest that the relationship between state legislators and mayors does not take the form of a top-down process in which bosses decide what, how, and to whom to offer benefits. This is because local brokers also play an active role in this relationship. Although occasionally the legislators' office plays an active role in offering benefits, the requests coming from the municipalities predominate. They come in large volumes throughout the year, in line with evidence from Bezerra (1999).

Among the interviewees' legislators' offices, most are organized, among other objectives, to assist the municipalities. In all of them, there is an internal division of labor and an effort to balance the "technical" and "political" parts of the staff. On the "political side" (as the advisors call it), priority is given to people linked to local communities, who have connections to mayors, local leaders, and social groups; people who have served the legislators for a long time, who worked in the last electoral campaign, and who have access to Executive agencies. On the "technical" side, they value essential skills in office management (secretariat, communication, legal advising, legislative process) as well as expertise and experience in key policy areas, such as health and education.

All interviewees stated that the legislator keeps a regional office and/or advisors working in one or more municipalities of reference for her. The number of employees in the offices is close to 20, with a minority (1 to 4) working at the regional office. In one case, almost half of the staff (9) worked in the region and would become part of the office that was about to be set up. These regional advisors' functions are to identify the demands, "mitigating the absence of the legislator in the region", "bringing to us the reality of a citizen", being "our voices and ears in the region" (Chief of Staff 4).

We note that only a minority of the staff members worked at the ground level – contrary to what Carvalho (2003) identified for national representatives. This is probably because state assemblies are closer to the non-capital municipalities. Moreover, since a large part of local requests is related to bureaucratic procedures involving Executive branch agencies, it seems more appropriate to keep most of the staff at the headquarters, where they have easier access to these structures.

Legislators with a profile linked to assisting municipalities (*municipalista*) usually follow this process to meet demands: mayors, city councilors, and other local leaders (especially former mayors and councilors) present the requests. Then the office is mobilized to meet those within the resources and options available.

So, the mayors bring their requests to the legislator, sometimes to help with some knotty ["agarrado"] project, and then we help them with the arguments. The mayors have quite a hard time with this, and we, who are prepared, sit down, orient, and help them. We get the document, take it, file it, proceed... (Chief of Staff 2).

Both survey waves show that one of their more frequent activities is to "deal with the government agencies to meet the requests of mayors in their region". Among those who listed mayors or councilors as one of their two main supports, 71.7% of those interviewed in 2007 said they often carried out this activity. This percentage was even higher in 2012: 73.3% of the surveyed.

The interviews present a strong evidence that offices allocate much time, energy, and personnel to assist municipalities and civic organizations (referred to as "entities") so they can meet the administrative requirements for accessing resources from upper levels of government. These actions show the informational role that state legislators' offices exercise for mayors and local leaders. Through these activities, legislators' offices try to mitigate municipalities' deficiencies in terms of human resources and technical expertise to deal with complex issues related to legal requirements.

Regarding budget amendments, legislators' offices usually organize spreadsheets containing all the requests, detailed by object (public work, equipment, vehicle purchase, and the like.), amount, municipality, and the broker who mediated and presented the request. Before legislators officially assign an amendment to a locality, the office usually contacts the requesters to inform them what can be done. Since it is impossible to fulfill all requests most of the time, mayors and councilors have to decide what they want to prioritize. For most interviewees, especially those who define the legislator as a "municipalist", there is no doubt that the budget amendments are the resources most valued by mayors.

The representative, since she is a municipalist legislator who does not go to the floor [of the state assembly] and rail everybody, who stands for the union, stands for education... The budget amendments are no doubt our flagship. It is amendments what every leader, every mayor expects (Chief of Staff 9).

In both waves of the survey, allocating amendments was the third most valued parliamentary activity (among five categories) – 16.0% in the first wave and 18.2% in the second – behind lawmaking and solving state problems. Thus, it is not insignificant, but it does not figure in the first position either. These answers may suffer from a social desirability bias. Still, it is worth noting that amendments may be central to the relationship between legislators and their local brokers but not necessarily to their performance as state representatives. Moreover, the bias of our sample of interviewees among "municipalists" may strengthen the relevance of pork barrel for these legislators.

Although interviewees reported a wide variety of sources of requests, it is clear that these gain more attention from the office when channeled by a local broker. Concerning requests from individuals, groups, and civil organizations mediated by the councilors, one interviewee stated:

He [the person] addresses this request to the councilor, and the councilor takes this mail and delivers it to us. So it is a request from the person but directed by the councilor. We receive a lot of letters, emails, WhatsApp; the mayor gives them our WhatsApp, and they send us lots of messages. Nowadays WhatsApp doesn't stop (Chief of Staff 8).

Our interviews suggest a more reactive behavior of state legislators, similar to what Nichter (2018) showed regarding the relationship between politicians and voters. According to him, politicians often react to voter requests by solving their demands. But, it is important to note that representatives can also be proactive. One of the interviewees, for example, stated that

there are “many things that the state provides” and mayors are not aware. In this case, the office mediates to deliver a benefit to the municipality, a dynamic also highlighted by Bezerra (1999, p. 121).

Given the high number of requests they receive from municipalities, how do the offices establish priorities? The interviews suggest that legislators balance two criteria: a need to favor the largest number of local partners and ensure that resources are tangible for the population and enough to carry out public works. The most vital is to ensure that the benefit has impact and visibility, which requires a greater volume of resources the larger a city is. In larger cities, according to one interviewee, “it will be very scattered” or, as another one put it, it may become grounds for criticism (allocating too few resources to a large city).

Almost all interviewees admitted that they favor municipalities where they performed better (because they had a significant number of votes or ended up the most voted state representative), or where they have high expectations of electoral returns (although other factors, such as loyalty, may result in exceptions). One interviewee stated that after listing all the demands from mayors, she proceeds as follows:

I surveyed all municipalities that had votes, regardless of whether it was the opposition or the incumbent. Then I presented to the representative the localities where she had the most votes, where she was the first most voted, the second... (Chief of Staff 6).

Another way to deal with an imbalance between the volume of requests and available resources is to consider other sources of aid to the municipality. Representatives consider, for example, the fact that some organizations, such as Apaes and Santa Casas, receive resources from several representatives. They can also refer the mayor (or other local leaders) to other legislators, concentrating their resources where their prospects for electoral returns are greater and less uncertain.

Normally here in the assembly you know the legislators that serve by region. So let's suppose that we receive a request from a person who lives in [municipality]... then there is a little book that you look at the region and suggest the person look for that representative. Some things are possible, we have already helped people here who are not from our region (...). It's just that we don't open a wide range because we can't handle it, the demand is too large (Chief of Staff 8).

According to the interviewees, state representatives usually collaborate with national representatives. Most of the time, these partnerships are with members of different parties but

from the same region. There seems to be a division of labor that pays off for all actors involved. While the national legislator can allocate greater financial resources to municipalities through budget amendments, the state representative has closer contacts with the region and voters, as reported in the interviews. In one of the cases included in our sample, there seemed to be almost a fusion between the state legislator and her national partner's office. In this case, they were fellow party members.

The interviewees tended to downplay the elections' period importance to establishing relationships with local brokers. They tended to say that the work on municipalities, local groups, and voters is done over the years and that use elections for publicizing actions and channeled benefits. Despite this, one cannot deny the impacts caused by the electoral cycle on the dynamics of these relationships. For example, representatives cannot channel amendments directly to civil organizations during election years. Furthermore, an amendment approved in a year may be executed in the following year, when neither the author of the amendment nor the allied mayor who demanded it may be in office anymore.

It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish between the dynamics of mediation in the election period and the period between elections. Much of the studies on brokers (Szwarcberg, 2012; Munoz, 2014; Aspinall, 2014; Gingerich, 2020) focus on the electoral moment and generalize their findings to the entire term of office. Thus, they tend to overestimate elements present in the election period and neglect dynamics that extend beyond that moment. The assumption that politicians orient their actions toward electoral success is reasonable, but this does not mean that all brokerage dynamics are reducible to the logic of campaigns or that they cannot assume different political meanings.

We did not restrict our analysis to the electoral period, and, like other scholars, we try to highlight the importance of non-electoral tasks performed by brokers (Auyero, 2000; Zarazaga, 2014; Hoyler, Gelape, and Silotto, 2021). They involve carrying out public works, implementing public policies, communicating local demands to the state government, and solving voters' individual and collective problems. In other words, brokers play a role in producing political outcomes other than votes.

The analysis of these brokerage relationships seems to offer little support for another important premise of principal-agent models: informational asymmetry in favor of the agent. Several studies on brokers assume that brokers have insider information relative to bosses and strategically use this advantage to extract more resources (Stokes et al., 2013; Camp, Dixit and Stokes, 2014; Keefer and Vlaicu, 2007; Novaes, 2018).

Indeed, mayors and councilors play an important informational role for state legislators. Our interviews suggest that representatives allocate resources based on demands from municipalities and that they consult with mayors and councilors in different negotiations around budget amendments. Legislators rely on brokers to know which benefits will be valued by the local population, and adjust the available resources to this information. Without brokers' support, legislators would face more obstacles in representing their constituents and influencing public policies.

On the other hand, as our analysis has shown, legislators are also important informational actors for local brokers. A significant part of what their offices offer for allies is information that depends on their expertise and differentiated access to state executive agencies, something not available for many municipalities' leaders. Therefore, there is mutual dependence on information valued by each agent in this transaction. This interpretation converges with the findings of one of the most extensive studies on brokers ever conducted. Brierley and Nathan (2021), studying the selection of brokers in Ghana, found no evidence supporting the "information asymmetry model" (2021:1). According to the authors, rather than downward ties to ordinary voters or detailed information about them, what mattered in selecting brokers was their upward ties and personal connections with members of party elites. Brokers with better upward ties are brokers with more knowledge and access to government agencies that concentrate the resources voters need.

MONITORING, LEARNING AND BREAK-UPS

As we have already stated, the literature on electoral mobilization via brokers highlights different indicators and metrics used by voters, candidates, politicians, and brokers to assess and monitor participants' behavior in mediation dynamics. On the one hand, the literature's assumption and the previous section's evidence suggest that alliances between local leaders and state representatives can benefit both sides. On the other hand, analyses inspired by principal-agent theories emphasize the importance of monitoring brokers and providing them private rewards (Camp, 2015) to minimize agency losses. For these analyses, it would be essential to ensure that parties can estimate when it is worth maintaining or breaking off the relationship and how much energy, time, and resources to allocate. In our case, how do state representatives evaluate the results of partnerships with local leaders and the prospects for electoral returns?

Although most interviewees have no doubts about the importance of these alliances, they tend to portray them as uncertain and subject to many disappointments. According to them, it is common for mayors to deliver far fewer votes than promised by the mayor and/or expected by the legislator. When this happens, the alliance is not necessarily broken or shaken, and other factors such as loyalty, strength of the bond, and previous work together play an important role in the renewal of trust.

The literature has already documented the uncertain nature of these partnerships in Brazil and other cases (Bezerra, 1999; Aspinall, 2014; Novaes, 2018). Nevertheless, unlike this evidence, our interviewees expressed less frequently their disappointment with mayors or other local brokers in terms of betrayal or opportunistic and predatory behavior. When questioned in these terms, interviewees showed empathy regarding the pressures mayors deal with.

Some mayors attribute “the [eventual] switch of sides” to changes in local politics’ dynamics or changes in parties’ electoral strategy. Regarding the issue of exclusivity, our interviews revealed contrasting perspectives. One interviewee considers that it is most appropriate for mayors to remain loyal to a single state legislator. However, others admit that diversifying is an option, especially when the allied legislator opposes the state governor and has less access to resources – a similar dynamic was identified by Bezerra (1999).

Efforts to monitor the behavior of local brokers include some systematic procedures such as spreadsheets with information about them, number of votes delivered, and expectations for the next election. Except for one, all legislators’ offices kept some version of this spreadsheet. This kind of practice aligns with the idea that politicians draw on election cycles to learn about brokers’ abilities (Gingerich, 2020). Nevertheless, our interviews also revealed more informal ways of monitoring. They are all based on gathering information concerning broker’s efforts, what she has done or is doing, but keeping in mind what it is in her power to accomplish.

Communication between office staff seems to be an important source of information for state representatives. This is how, for example, an advisor gets to know if an allied or soliciting mayor has also been requesting help and pledging votes in other offices. The legislator’s local networks and visits to the municipality are also important to estimate how much mayors have dedicated themselves to mobilizing voters during the campaign. In addition, mayors’ invitations to attend the inauguration of public works and other events are also signs that she is committed to promoting the representative in her city. Therefore, monitoring takes place through different strategies that make it possible to distinguish brokers and thus calibrate the resource distribution to different localities. As other studies have pointed out (Szwarcberg, 2015; Gingerich, 2020),

our evidence shows the importance of learning in selecting brokers and updating expectations about them.

Analyzing partnerships between representatives and mayors, Samuels (2002) stressed the risk of credit capture by mayors who are responsible for implementing the amendments directed to municipalities. In order to minimize this problem representatives could prioritize amendments for municipalities administered by fellow party members (Baião and Couto, 2017) or create alternative direct communication channels with the population.

Our interviews suggest that representatives may be less reliant on mayors to claim credit for benefits than the literature supposes. First, as noted above, the credit claiming can be made through a city councilor, former mayor, or another local support (someone from their “political group”). Second, the legislators’ offices work to give visibility to their actions. Thus, mayors would have little room to “credit capture”. Moreover, according to the interviewees, the growing use of social media expands the opportunities for voters to obtain information independently and for the representative’s office to communicate more directly with them, lowering the mayor’s importance.

According to the interviewee who stated that the lower importance of mayoral support for her election, social media virtually dismisses mayors as informational channels. When discussing the possibility of a mayor not giving credit for the representative’s actions or trying to cheat her, the interviewee said that:

Today, if the mayor goes there [municipality], there are 400 people there who follow our networks and will know that it’s a lie. In two hours, this becomes a problem for the mayor. So, she is not so foolish as to do something like this” (Chief of Staff 5).

Finally, elections emerged as the main event to explain discontinuities. Electoral defeats (whether of legislators, mayors, or city councilors) can lead to the end of alliances and serve as an opportunity for new partnerships among those still in office. It is also clear that except for the discontinuity resulting from elections, state representatives rarely explicitly break-up a relationship with their brokers. They may not try as hard to assist a mayor or a councilor who did not perform well in terms of votes delivered, but they still work on other compensation strategies. When they occur, the break-ups seem to come from mayors, who start to consider other legislators and search for more promising partnerships to raise financial resources and benefits for their hometowns – a phenomenon also observed by Bezerra (1999).

If it is true that local brokers, especially mayors, play an important role in the legislator's electoral success, one would expect that they would also be held responsible for defeats, to some degree. Among our interviewees, two worked for representatives who were not reelected. When questioned about the reasons for the legislators' defeat, although they expressed disappointment with the mayors' performance in terms electoral brokerage, these interviewees tended to give more importance to other factors. Among them, they emphasized the office's difficulty to independently communicate with voters using new technologies, such as social media. In other words, there seems to be an awareness of the need for representatives to become increasingly independent of mediators to get credit for their actions.

The evidence in this section suggests that principal-agent theories are insufficient to characterize the relationship dynamics between state representatives and their local brokers. The risks that characterize these relationships do not arise from an inherent conflict between the participants' goals or from informational asymmetry in favor of the agents. Our data shows a good deal of continuity between the goals of local brokers and representatives, namely to ensure their success in the next round of elections by offering resources and benefits valued by the local population and by meeting private requests. Moreover, if politicians recruit brokers based on their upward ties with party elites, as pointed out by Brierley and Nathan (2021) and suggested by our evidence, we should expect smaller risks of defection and opportunistic behavior. If, as we have also seen, participants in these relationships play dual roles, both face problems of commitment and informational asymmetry. Although both have exit options (Novaes, 2018), they also face obstacles in following this alternative. Ideally, it would be rational for legislators to expand their local networks by adding mayors and councilors continuously, as well as for mayors to seek more profitable partnerships. However, this implies costs, sometimes prohibitive, as highlighted by Hicken and Nathan (2020) and evidenced by our interviews. These are some reasons as to why goals between these actors are kept aligned.

In addition to difficulties in assessing broker performance, actors cannot always produce the results expected by their allies. The interviewees believe that, on many occasions, local brokers underperform for reasons beyond their control, such as reorganization of forces in local politics, party decisions that impact alternatives at their disposal, and alternation of power caused by state and municipal elections. Thus, they seem more inclined to acknowledge the positive role of local allies than to blame them for bad results. In other words, as opposed to what theory assumes, the principal is not always able to adequately punish (or make credible threats) to force commitment.

We can even speculate that in a context of strong electoral competition, such as the Brazilian one, the value of loyalty increases (while disloyalty is not exemplarily punished) because it brings predictability to the legislator about her “safe” electoral assets. This does not mean that, from a representatives’ point of view, investing in brokers is irrational. In line with what Hicken and Nathan (2020) propose, this may reflect their perception that, even in the face of all the risks and the impossibility of adequately sanctioning brokers, legislators depend on them to build their reputation in the municipalities. Furthermore, widespread expectations among voters may lead representatives to nurture relationships with brokers, fearing that they will have their place taken by their opponents if they do not. Concerning informational asymmetry, principals may also develop strategies to reduce their dependence on local brokers. For example, they can implement forms of direct communication with their constituencies and pursue independent information from other partners.

Our empirical findings and their interpretation are based on how the institutional design established in 1988 in Brazil distributes power, resources, and authority, horizontally and vertically, among the branches and the entities of the federation. Many studies have highlighted how Brazilian institutions produce a complex system of crossed responsibilities, marked by asymmetries of various kinds, a mix of autonomy and dependency, and simultaneous incentives for cooperation and competition. This is reflected in the career incentives for politicians – who do not necessarily work towards national careers (Samuels, 2003; Santos; Pegurier, 2011) – and in many ways in which politicians at different levels connect, articulate, and cooperate to solve problems, implement policies, and pursue electoral goals. We cannot characterize these relationships as horizontal, but it is neither possible to speak of rigid hierarchies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article focused on the relationships between state legislators and local brokers. We investigated the importance and role of local brokers for the state representatives, how they build and nurture their partnership, and the reasons behind the eventual break-ups. We based our analysis on survey data with state representatives and in-depth interviews with advisors in state assemblies.

We provide evidence that mayors and local councilors play an essential role as brokers for some state representatives and that regional ties and friendship are relevant factors in building alliances. We also show that legislators nurture these partnerships by meeting local brokers’ requests, acting to solve problems with the government bureaucracy, and directing

public resources to municipalities. We also argue that although legislators strive to monitor brokers' behavior, they are not always able or willing to punish them.

These conclusions about the Brazilian case might be relevant for other contexts, especially for: (i) decentralized countries in which municipalities have political autonomy, responsibilities in critical policy areas, and where local politicians have a prominent position in the political system; (ii) countries in which municipal elections are held separately from elections for the other levels; (iii) settings with a poorly institutionalized party system where other elements prove critical in articulating multilevel alliances.

Based on our findings, we call into question whether a pure principal-agent model is an adequate framework for studying the relationships between legislators and local brokers in Brazil. We also suggest four lines of investigation that may contribute to advancing our understanding of aspects neglected by the literature on the topic.

Consistent with studies carried out in Brazil and the comparative literature, we observed that cooperation between state representatives and local brokers seems worthwhile for both sides, notwithstanding the risks they imply. We claim that one should not approach these risks as dilemmas typical of principal-agent models. We find no support for the thesis of an inherent conflict of objectives between the participants, especially when dealing with brokers who hold elective office or have held it in the past. We also point out that although there is information asymmetry between the participants, this does not invariably benefit agents or brokers. Thus, without evidence to support the fundamental assumptions of these theories, we highlight their limits to describe and analyze the relationships studied here. Thus, we propose that principal-agent theories should not be taken as the primary analytical framework for thinking about these relationships. It can be helpful as a heuristic tool since it is employed not as "superior-subordinate dyads" (Waterman and Meier, 1998) but with more flexibility, considering that actors are involved in multiple relationships simultaneously, at different levels and temporalities. It is also important to consider that these relationships occur in different contexts that impact levels of uncertainty, informational asymmetry, dependence between participants, and the degree to which interests and goals converge or not. Thus, elements usually taken as universal assumptions should be treated as variables (Waterman and Meier, 1998). This means considering that these relationships' dynamics may vary depending on factors such as the size of the municipality, proximity to the election, degree of electoral competition, levels of party system institutionalization, potential size of brokerage networks, among others.

The centrality attributed to brokers who hold elective office as opposed to the other representatives' local supporters shows that it is crucial to better understand this kind of broker

and what they bring to this relationship. As elected representatives, mayors and councilors are subject to control and monitoring by their bosses in part of the time. In the rest of the time, while acting as bosses, they demand resources (pork barrel budget amendments and electoral support), differently from the rewards that the literature generally identifies for brokers. Even those who agree that there is a very diverse range of brokers' types (Aspinall, 2014; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Mares & Young, 2016) tend to neglect this distinction between elected and non-elected brokers. We speculate that this distinction must imply in different relationship patterns with bosses. One way to clarify these differences is to invest in more research focused on the brokers themselves.

A second aspect concerns the need to advance the understanding of brokerage dynamics by paying attention to differences between the electoral campaign period and the one beyond elections. This is another aspect overlooked by the literature, which often bases its propositions about brokers on observations related to campaign activities, overestimating the electoral elements of these dynamics. In our study, it was common for interviewees to downplay the election's period importance to claim credit for actions, suggesting this is a more enduring and ongoing endeavor. Even if some works have recognized the importance of brokers beyond elections and for the production of other political outcomes, such as implementing public works and social policies (Auyero, 2000; Zarazaga, 2014; Hoyler, Gelape, and Silotto, 2021), we need further research to elucidate the differences and connections between these moments.

A third analytical task is to explore the differences that characterize the relationships of local brokers with state or national representatives. It was surprising to find such striking similarities between our analysis and aspects reported by Bezerra (1999) in a study carried out twenty years ago. Future research should investigate the reasons for these similarities, especially given the differences in duties and authority between national and state legislators. They might be due to the similar incentives generated by national and state representatives sharing the same rules and running in the same electoral district, for example. Nevertheless, we also registered differences, such as the greater volume of resources available to national legislators to assist their allies and the greater proximity state legislators have to their constituencies. It is thus reasonable to expect some kind of division of labor among legislators, and that local brokers decide whom to turn to depending on the problem or need to be addressed.

The last line of inquiry concerns the relevance of other factors for the selection of brokers besides political parties. As discussed, the literature in Brazil gives precedence to the study of party brokers, which are relevant, as the survey we presented in this paper has shown. However, we found evidence that other selection methods, such as personal and regional ties,

are also important, although little investigated, probably due to the difficulty of operationalizing these variables. In order to better understand the dynamics of multi-level support networks and refine existing theories, it is crucial to investigate these other factors.

Our findings have several analytical implications for studying the mediation dynamics between political actors at different levels. They suggest some promising research paths, such as research designs based on innovative network analysis, the use of social media to identify and analyze multilevel alliances, longitudinal analyses capable of measuring factors associated with stability and discontinuities, and qualitative research techniques focused on mechanisms underlying these relationships. We also stress that using comparative (cross-country or subnational) and multi-method research designs is an important tool to maximize the inferential potential of analyses in this field. Part of the questions we raised are based on interviews in a single state and from a specific legislator profile. Comparative research designs which integrate additional quantitative and qualitative evidence would allow us to further explore some of the research avenues proposed in the previous lines.

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APPENDIX A - Description of the interviews

For our sample, we chose representatives (elected for the 2015-2018 legislature) who had at least 30% of their votes in a given region of the chosen state. Nine legislators from the chosen region met this requirement. Six won reelection in 2018, while three did not. Given the impossibility of conducting the interview with advisors of two legislators, we replaced them with staff from two other legislators who had at least 20% of votes concentrated in this region. Ten interviews were conducted (nine chiefs of staff and one advisor) of nine state representatives.

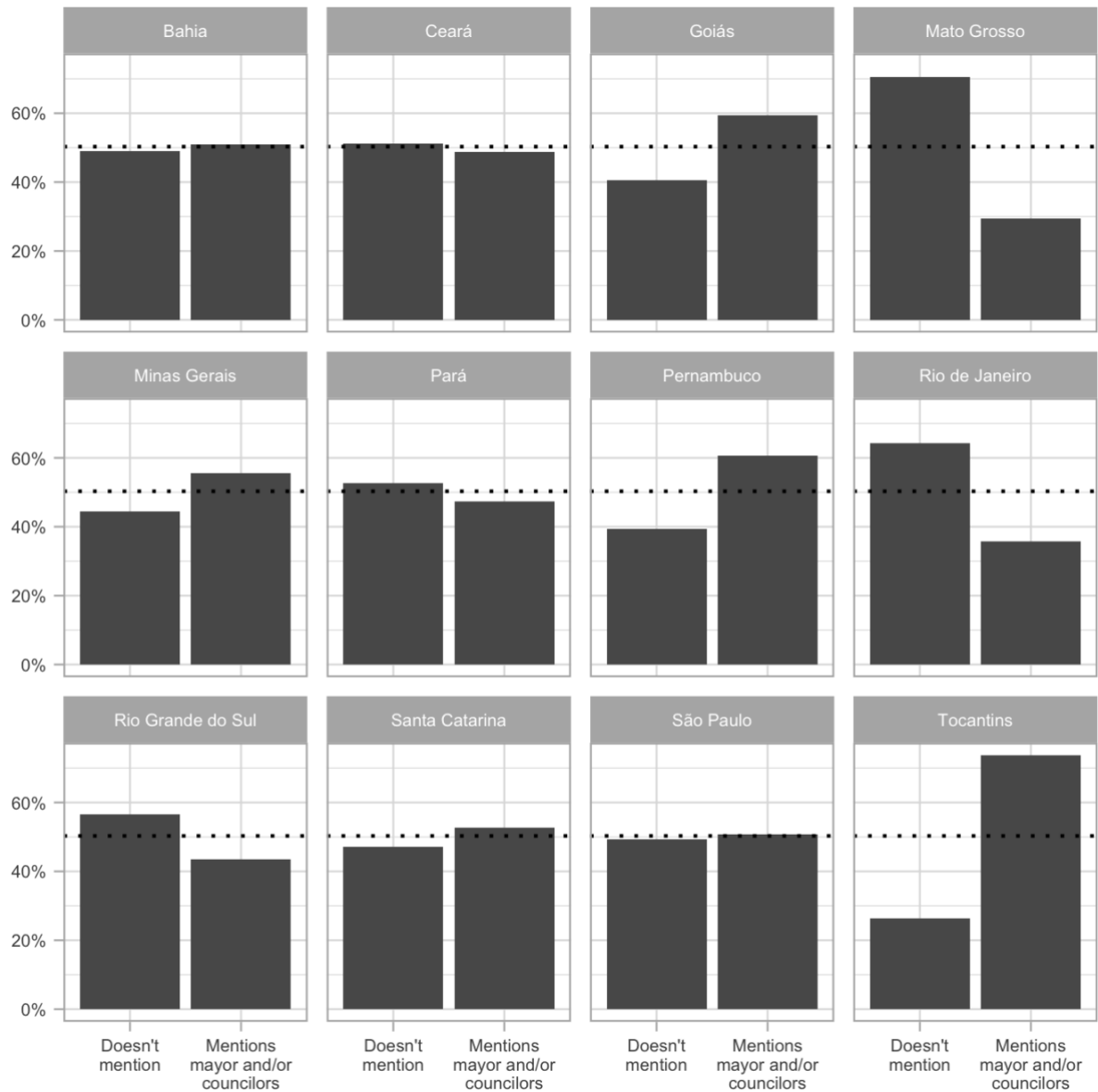
The reference region is quite representative of the state's reality: remarkable internal heterogeneity and economic disparity among its municipalities. Most of its municipalities have less than 50 thousand inhabitants, and more than 80% of the population lives in the urban region. The per capita income slightly exceeds the state's average, and the Human Development Index is very close to the state's, lying in the "high" range.

Eight interviews were carried out in the legislators' office at the state assembly. The interviews with advisors from the two non-reelected representatives were held: (i) in the advisor's professional office in their hometown and (ii) the advisor's home. All interviews were conducted between September and November 2019. Their length ranges from 59 minutes to 1 hour and 44 minutes.

Seven interviewees were male, and three were female. Except for three younger advisors, ages 29, 34, and 36, the others were over 40 years old and accumulated many years of experience in parliamentary advising (most of the time, they had worked for other representatives) and in positions in the Executive Branch. Three had a very technical profile, and the others combined technical expertise with political experience. Only three of the interviewees were affiliated with the legislator's political party. Two of them said they strongly identified with the representative's party (one left-wing and one right-wing). In the other cases, the relationship with the parties was either non-existent or circumstantial. Without exception, they all stated that they had no ambition to run for elective office in the future.

APPENDIX B – Cross tabs of survey variables: mentions of mayors and councilors as one of the most important supports, state, and political party

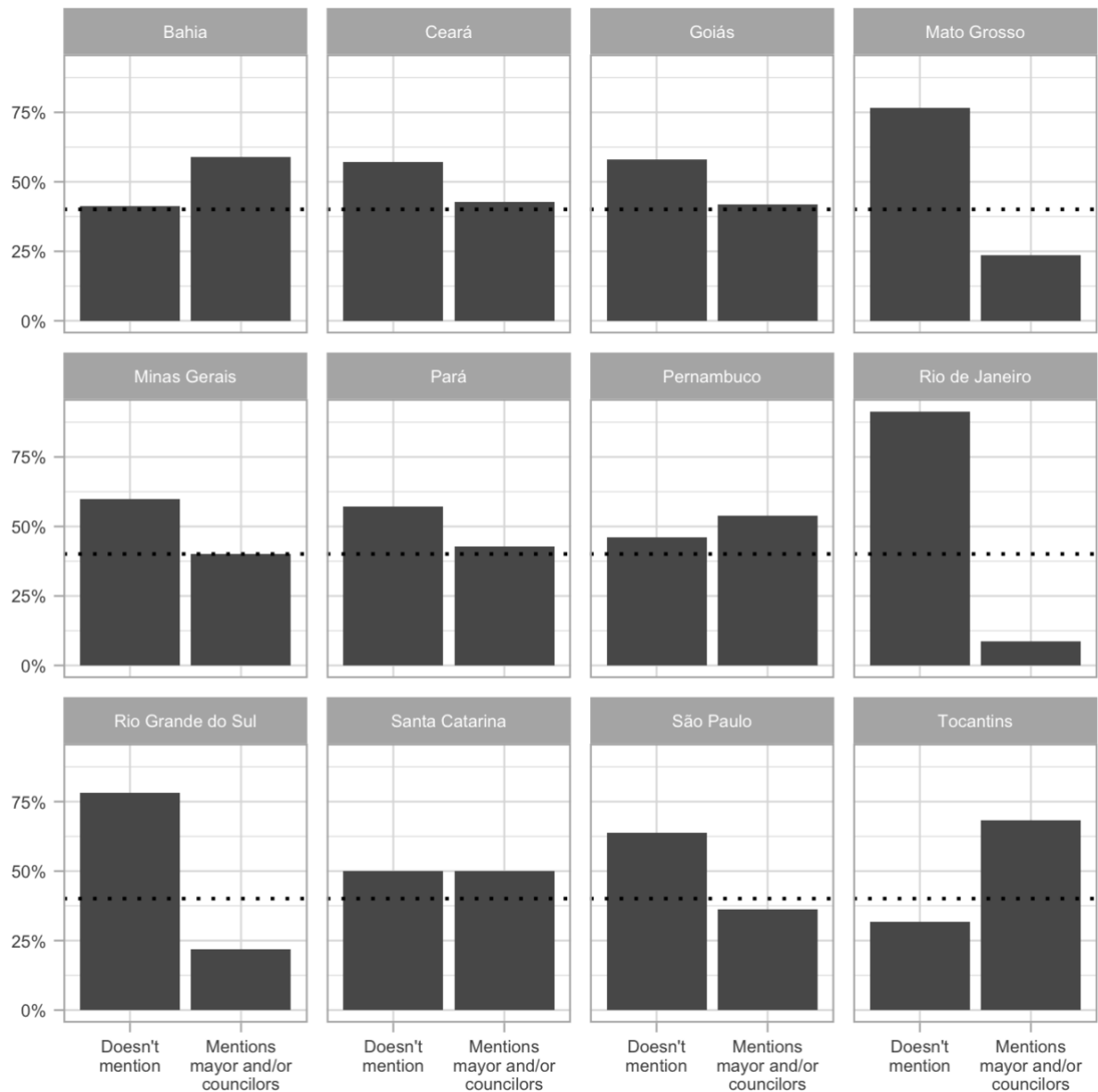
Figure B.1: Legislators who mentioned mayors and/or local councilors as one of the two most important supports for their election (2007) by State (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data survey from CEL-UFMG.

Note: the dotted line shows the average number of representatives who mention mayors and/or councilors.

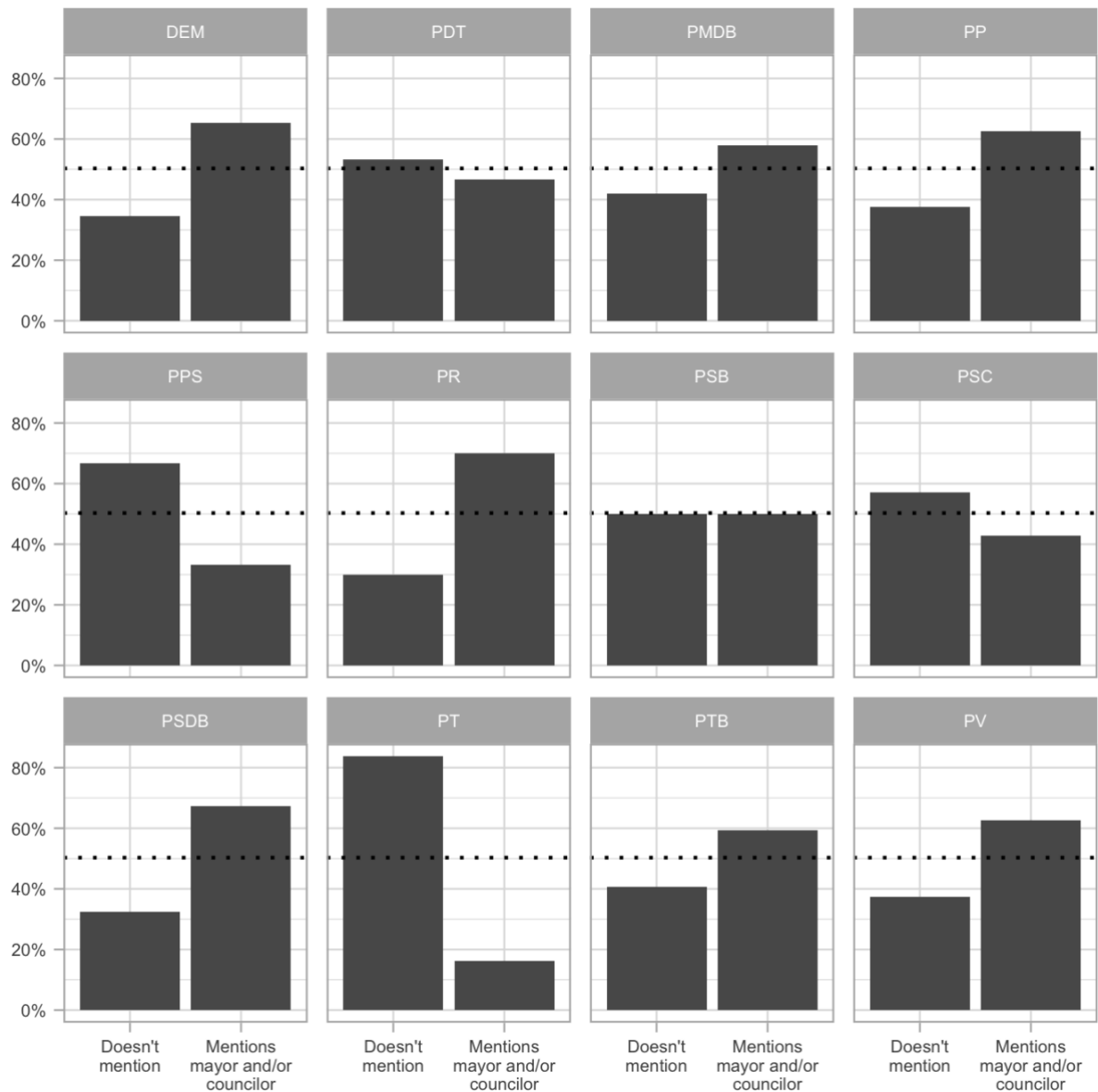
Figure B.2: Legislators who mentioned mayors and/or local councilors as one of the two most important supports for their election (2012) by State (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data survey from CEL-UFMG.

Note: the dotted line shows the average number of representatives who mention mayors and/or councilors.

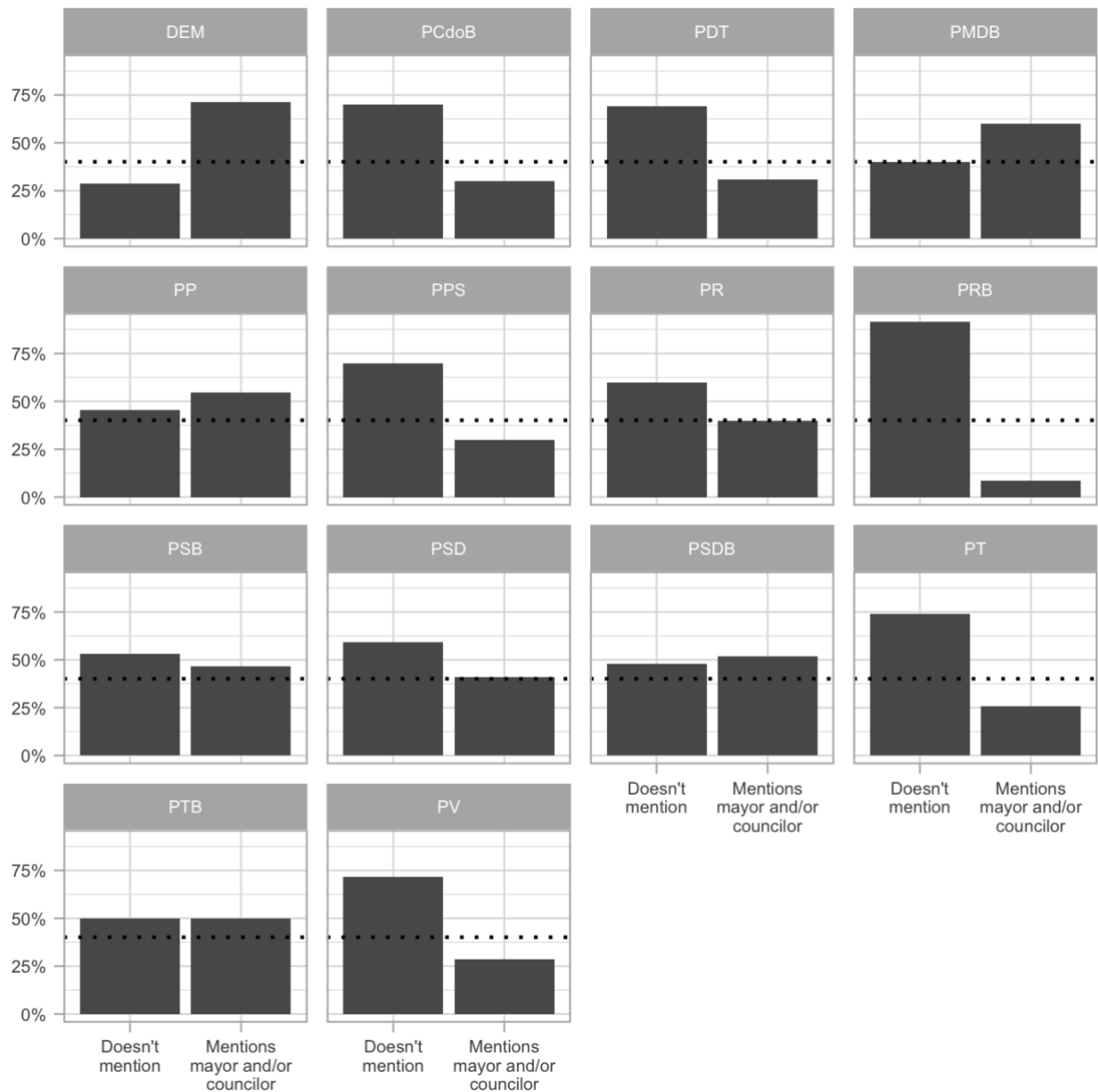
Figure B.3: Legislators who mentioned mayors and/or local councilors as one of the two most important supports for their election (2007) by party (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data survey from CEL-UFMG.

Note: only parties with 10 or more respondents were included. The dotted line shows the average number of legislators who mention mayors and/or councilors.

Figure B.4: Legislators who mentioned mayors and/or local councilors as one of the two most important supports for their election (2012) by party (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data survey from CEL-UFMG.

Note: only parties with 10 or more respondents were included. The dotted line shows the average number of legislators who mention mayors and/or councilors.

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