

**Networking for Empowering:  
Social Media and Civil Society Organizations in the Global Arena of Power**

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**Abstract**

Our main objective is to analyze whether information and communication technologies (ICTs) impact the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in three dimensions of the global arena of power: transnational, governmental, and societal. Building upon the Survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in Brazilian Nonprofit Organizations 2012 and 2014 conducted in Brazil by the National Internet Steering Committee (CGI), we operationalize that question by assessing the effects of website, Facebook, and Twitter account ownership with foreign counterparts and, in the domestic level, with the government and individuals. We assume that the Internet is not a platform for disputes, but rather a space for interactions among actors, since the contemporary technological revolution gave rise to the expansion in the capacity of data storage and the increasing number of communication platforms, including social media. More than allowing efficient information sharing, it enables real time communication among actors in different social spheres and in geographically distant locations. In such a scenario, the costs of communication decreased drastically and, at the same time, became more efficient. Through probit models, we find, on the one hand, a positive correlation between the ownership of a Facebook account and interaction with all three actors. On the other hand, having a website and a Twitter account has a positive correlation only in interactions with foreign CSOs and the national government. The results indicate the need to develop qualitative works to identify the causal mechanisms that exist behind such correlations.

## Introduction

What is the impact of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) upon the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in establishing ties with other actors, particularly within governments? In this paper, we test whether in Brazil CSO online presence through websites and social network accounts have a positive impact on capacity of interacting with three segments of the global arena of power: the state and the society at the domestic level, and counterparts based in other countries. Using probit regression models run with data from Survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in Brazilian Nonprofit Organizations 2012 and 2014, conducted by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (CGI), we find that ownership of a Facebook account increases a CSO's chances of establishing ties with all three segments. Counterintuitively, having a website is negatively correlated with the probability that an organization has voluntary workers—a proxy that measures interactions with society at the domestic level. The same happens with CSOs that own Twitter accounts.

Following Noesselt (2014: 450-451), we assume that the Internet is not a platform for disputes between society and the state, but rather a space for interactions among actors located in both spheres. In addition to those spheres, we also work with the transnational space. We also work with Zheng's and Fu's (2005: 508) threefold argument on the impact of Internet on socio-political dynamics. Internet has impacted the way state and society actors interact with each other, while expanding the possibilities of civic engagement and, thus, the possibility of political changes. We justify our effort based on the fact that Internet diffusion "...was both supported and advanced by cultural, political and economic globalization, with e-government, e-commerce, and social networking sites emerging as new institutions of modern society" (McNutt and Pal 2011: 449). The use of these institutions by collective actors can enhance democratic participation, allowing civil

society to move beyond mere activist towards actual influence upon policymaking. As Castells (2008: 78) argues, “[w]ithout an effective civil society capable of structuring and channeling citizen debates over diverse ideas and conflicting interests, the state drifts away from its subjects.”

Brazil constitutes a critical case, for attaining the purposes of this article, “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton 2001: 236). First, it is a democratic country in the Global South with considerable size of internet market. Second, its civil society is reputed to be active in policymaking. Unfortunately, the available data does not allow us for testing for the potential impact of digital media on CSOs ability to impact policymaking, thus leaving unanswered whether such organizations go beyond mere participation and become influential (Martin 2000) on state decisions<sup>1</sup>. Yet, by assessing whether the use of those media increases the chances that CSOs become more active vis-à-vis actors abroad and within the state and the domestic society, we aim to contribute to the scholarship in the field and furnish the basis for future research that takes into account that possibility.

We begin the paper by revising the literature that discusses the impact of digital media on state-society relations. We then move on to elaborate our analytical framework based on the assumption that digital media are embedded institutions rather than mere devices or independent factors in collective action. The empirical section begins with further details on case selection, the statistical methods employed in the analysis, and a description of the variables we take into account in our models, as well as explanations of our operationalization choices. We thus discuss the results and conclude by proposing new avenues of research based on our findings.

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<sup>1</sup> “For instance, a given actor—be it an individual or a collective—may have more weight on final decisions despite not being very active during the formulation of a certain policy.” (Rodrigues Vieira 2016: 9).

### **State, Society, and Digital Media**

Literature has privileged the Global North and traditional forms of Web-based state-society interaction, focusing individuals rather than collective actors on the societal side.

As Castells (2008: 98) argues,

“It is through the media, both mass media and horizontal networks of communication, that nonstate actors influence people’s minds and foster social change. Ultimately, the transformation of consciousness does have consequences on political behavior, on voting patterns, and on the decisions of governments”

Notwithstanding the emergence of a Global Civil Society, NGOs still act locally—and that may be the case even whenever they resort to digital activism. That is the case as long as most of internet audience prefers interacting with nationally based contents rather than with foreign sources (Schmidt and Cohen 2013).

The literature has also debated how e-governance serves to improve citizens' trust in governments, including at the local level. In a pre-social network age, Chadwick and May (2003) identified that in US, UK, and EU e-government initiatives reproduced a managerial rather than participative or at least consultative logic. Torres, Pina, and Acerte (2006), in turn, found that the effects of internet upon democratic participation and policymaking depended upon the configuration of pre-existing political-social modes of organization. Yet little exists on state interactions with collective actors rather than individuals, not to mention the lack of empirical works beyond the advanced industrial democracies and China (Zheng and Wu 2005), which is a single party regime, yet with some quasi-democratic institutions (Meng, Pan, and Yang 2014). Moreover, E-government or individual initiatives to interact with the state do not suffice for making

the internet a mean of democratic participation. CSOs have to take part in this process. Collective actors can enhance citizens' capacity of demanding improvement in public policy. Thus, it is necessary to assess CSOs capacity of using online environments to achieve their goals.

Löblich and Wendelin (2012) found that civil society uses online tools to influence policymaking in Germany, yet the work focuses solely the formulation of ICT-related rules. The concept of Virtual Policy Networks (VPNs) (McNutt and Pal 2011: 449) could suffice for meeting the goals of this paper were it not for the fact that it focuses websites only, neglecting other spaces of virtual interaction, particularly social networks<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, such works focuses only the domestic level, ignoring the broad global arena of power. The latter also embeds foreign actors—both associated with states (such as other national governments and intergovernmental organizations—IGOs) and society (through transnational links with CSOs based abroad).

In fact, evidence suggest that digital media is embedded in the broad social environment. The state cannot isolate itself from the impact widespread of technological devices among the population given that governmental institutions are actors embedded in society as others (Migdal 2001). Milner (2006) found that democratic regimes facilitate the spread of internet more than autocratic ones. However, even in single-party regimes, digital media shifts patterns of state-society interactions. In China, governments in the subnational level became responsive to demands society channels to the state via social media, including micro-blogs (Noesselt 2014)<sup>3</sup>. Hence, the “virtual” world digital devices enable from are far from creating a new world, detached from the “real” one (Zheng and Wu 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> “[V]irtual policy networks are Web-based networks of policy actors’ Web-sites connected through hyperlinks” (McNutt and Pal 2011: 449).

<sup>3</sup> Responsiveness in China, however, reduces whenever public officials perceive that citizens’ demands are contentious vis-à-vis state institutions (Meng, Pan, and Yang 2014).

Hampton (2011) identifies that online interactions foster the diversification of membership of pre-existent social networks, bridging ties among core participants of those networks. Diversification of networks, in turn, increases democratic engagement, however without implying on the subversion of conventional constraints or more effectiveness in influencing the state. For instance, Brancatti's (2014) study on pro-democracy protests between even suggest that connectivity among individuals through virtual digital devices do not even increase the likelihood of social unrest, which would then result only from "real" world phenomena, particularly economic crises. In addition, as Stein (2009) argues for the U.S. case, social movements have not fully explored the potential that internet offers to advertise their work.

However, to the best of our knowledge, the literature has not explored yet those questions in countries outside the Global North, with the exception of China. Other points, such as the establishment of transnational networks with foreign CSOs and gathering domestic support from individuals, are overlooked. We aim to fill such a gap with the analysis of the Brazilian case.

### **Empirical Analysis**

As explained in the introduction, Brazil is a critical case for attaining the purposes of this article: it is recent democracy and makes-up a large internet market, having also an active civil society interacting with the state. Thus, with a sizable variation in the characteristics of both CSOs and the social environment they embed, we expect to gain better insights on testing our hypotheses without selecting cases/observations based on the value of the dependent variable (Geddes 2003).

### Data

We use data from the Survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in Brazilian Nonprofit Organizations 2012 and 2014 (henceforth ICT Survey), conducted

by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (CGI). These are the only surveys on the topic conducted so far in Brazil and counted with the support and supervision of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

CSOs access to internet in Brazil is far from universal. In 2014, 31 percent of all CSOs did not use internet (Barbosa 2015, 123). Such a limitation somehow reflects on the capacity of Brazilian CSOs to establish linkages with analogous entities abroad. Only 15 percent of them collaborate with organizations outside the country (Ibid.). The trends have not changed in comparison to 2012. In general terms, both editions of the survey have found that access to ICT resources depends on the size of the organization: the larger the number of persons they employ as regular workers, the higher the chances that the CSO has computers and internet access.

We thus work with three models, one for each type of interaction with the CSO (transnational, governmental, and societal). In the first model, we measure whether a CSO is internationalized by coding one in the case the organization has foreign partnerships and zero for otherwise. In the second model, we aim to assess what correlates with a CSO's degree of interaction with governmental institutions. We then coded one for organizations that reported to the ICT Survey to have accessed governmental sites for lobbying purposes (please see the appendix for details on the type of actions we considered as lobbying). Finally, in the societal model, we have as dependent variable the proportion of people within the organization that works there voluntarily. With this, we aim to capture how well integrated with society the CSO is.

We consider three independent variables here. First, we code one for CSOs that have a website and zero for those that do not. Second, we consider whether a CSO has a Facebook account as this is by any standards the most used social network in Brazil. Third, we measure the presence at Twitter, the second most used social network in the

country. The second and third independent variables are not mutually exclusive, as the ICT Survey allowed multiple answers for the question on the use of social networks by CSOs (Barbosa 2012 and 2015). In the light of the literature review, we expect that all these variables have positive effects upon the dependent variable of each of the three models. Having a website and presence in social media can enhance a CSO capacity of interacting with actors of any kind.

We have two types of dummies that serve as control variables. The first relates to CSO characteristics related to the environment that embed them. In the light of Brazil's recent political context in which Christian churches have become more involved in politics and policymaking (Freston 2015), we are interested whether CSO with religious purposes (ReligiousCSO) tend to have a positive impact upon the dependent variables. As the literature often associates this characteristic with political empowerment, we test it coding one in the case a characteristic is positive and zero otherwise. In what concerns the social-temporal environment where CSOs are inserted, we first measure the effect of the Brazilian region where the organization mainly acts (DevelopedRegion). We code one for those located in states in the South and Southeast, with high levels of human development (equal or above 0.7 in a 0-1 scale, according to UNDP 2013), and zero if acting mainly elsewhere in the country. We expect that both control proxies have as much effect as the independent variables given that CSOs located in most developed regions have access to more capabilities than others, while religious organizations can mobilize more actors and, thus, enhance its ties with foreign counterparts, the state, and individuals.

Second, we account for the potential impact of sources of CSO funding upon their capacity of articulating with transnational, governmental, and individuals within civil society. For this, we have a set of variables that account for the potential impact of origin of resources on organizations' capacity of interacting with those three groups of actors.



The variable SourceFedGov controls for the federal government as the source of funding for the CSO. This is of paramount relevance given the historical ties between most of them and the Workers' Party (PT), which led the federal government during the period under analysis (Hochstetler 2008). In turn, variables SourceStateGov and SourceLocalGov indicate the existence of funding coming from state and municipal governments respectively. For the variable SourceIGO, we assigned value one in the case a CSO has IGOs as one of its sources of revenue, and zero when most resources come from elsewhere. IGOs are known for interacting with CSO based in various sovereign states, yet the effects of such exchange still demand further clarification through empirical research (Steffek 2013), thus justifying the inclusion of this control. External influence is also controlled with the dummy SourceForeignGov, coded as one whenever the CSO received resources from national governments other than the Brazilian one. SourceDonation and SourceMkt account respectively for individuals' contributions and private companies' donations. As the proxies do not reveal the weight of each type of funding on a CSO total budget, we do not await any significant effects on the dependent variables.

Finally, to control for time, we attributed one to observations gathered in 2012 and zero in 2014 (year2012 variable). No significant effects are expected in this case either. We summarize in table 1 the expected impact of each independent variable and controls upon the dependent variable of each of the three models we work with. For the independent variables, that measures the impact of different digital media.

**Table 1.** Variables – Descriptive Data

Name	Meaning	Expected Impact
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<b>Independent Variables</b>		
Website	Online exposition	Positive
Facebook	Online interaction (most common)	Positive
Twitter	Online interaction (less common)	Positive
<b>Control Variables</b>		
ReligiousCSO	Organization has a religious focus	Positive
DevelopedRegion	Based on either South or Southeast (most developed Brazilian regions)	Positive
SourceFedGov	Funding received from the Federal Government	Positive
SourceStateGov	Funding received from State Government	None
SourceLocalGov	Funding received from Municipal Government	None
SourceForeignGov	Funding received from Foreign Government	None
SourceIGO	Funding received from IGO	None
SourceDonation	Funding received from voluntary donations	None
SourceMkt	Funding received from private companies	None
year2012	Observation collected for the 2012 survey	None

### Results and Discussion

Table 2 brings the results for the regression analysis in core models. According to the Data section, we work with three probit models, one for each type of interaction a CSO has: transnational, governmental, and societal. In addition, we consider three independent variables for each model: website, Facebook, Twitter, as well as the control variables detailed above.

**Table 2.** Core Models

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)
	PartCSOInt	InteractGov	InteractSoc
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
Website	0.497**** (0.0515)	0.244**** (0.0458)	-0.191**** (0.0500)
Facebook	0.185*** (0.0543)	0.286**** (0.0467)	0.228**** (0.0519)
Twitter	0.373**** (0.0643)	0.152** (0.0661)	-0.202*** (0.0680)
<b>Controls</b>			
ReligiousCSO	0.499**** (0.0677)	-0.378**** (0.0633)	0.135* (0.0804)
DevelopedRegion	-0.107** (0.0506)	-0.104** (0.0448)	-0.0564 (0.0486)
SourceFedGov	0.0750 (0.0748)	0.411**** (0.0708)	0.109 (0.0713)
SourceStateGov	0.0811 (0.0729)	0.299**** (0.0677)	0.0859 (0.0697)
SourceLocalGov	-0.144** (0.0650)	0.289**** (0.0560)	0.0268 (0.0602)
SourceForeignGov	1.433**** (0.153)	0.401** (0.175)	-0.0438 (0.167)
SourceIGO	0.750**** (0.153)	0.391** (0.191)	0.205 (0.180)
SourceDonation	0.162*** (0.0532)	0.183**** (0.0468)	0.948**** (0.0525)
SourceMkt	0.0968* (0.0557)	0.203**** (0.0512)	0.00434 (0.0549)
year2012	0.114** (0.0487)	0.0201 (0.0430)	0.0520 (0.0469)
Constant	-1.518**** (0.0635)	-0.123** (0.0519)	0.254**** (0.0549)
Log-Likelihood	-1817.1399	-2457.6421	-2019.8844
Observations	4,165	4,168	4,093

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

The first model aims to analyze if the existence of an institutional website, Facebook or Twitter accounts affects the capacity a CSO has in interacting with non-governmental actors that are transnational. The model uses as proxy for transnational interactions a dummy variable coded as one in the case of partnerships between the CSO and foreign counterparts and zero for otherwise. There is a highly significant ( $p<0.001$ ) interaction with positive effects on the explanatory variable for website and Twitter account. In turn, Facebook is significant ( $p<0.01$ ), with positive effects only in a lower confidence level.

The results lead to three conclusions. First, having a website increases (with 99.9 percent of confidence) the probability that a CSOs establishes transnational partnerships, Second, Facebook account also increases the same probability (with 99 percent of confidence). Third, CSOs that own Twitter accounts raise the likelihood of building transnational ties with counterparts (with 99.9 percent of confidence).

As for the control variables, it is worth discussing the impact of the most significant proxies on the establishment of transnational links. A CSO that has religious purposes has more chances (99.9 percent of confidence) of having transnational partnerships than others. This is not surprisingly, as most religious denominations have cross-border activities. Yet, evidence suggests that the establishment of such transnational partnership also depends on how the CSO is funded. We highlight the high and significant correlation between receiving funds from foreign governments and the dependent variable. The same happens when a CSO receives resources from IGOs, although the dimension of the effect is about lower than that of SourceForeignGov (both in the 99 percent confidence interval). Those relations are expected as foreign government and IGO funding of CSOs may be conditioned upon the pursuit of ties with counterparts abroad. Results thus reflect some degree of collinearity with the dependent variable rather than a potential causal relation. Alternatively, such patterns possibly steam from the lack of funds from closest sources. Indeed, resources coming from local CSOs affect negatively the likelihood of having partners abroad (yet in a lower level of confidence—95 percent). The same logic applies if a CSO is based at a developed region (South and Southeast regions, as explained in the previous section).

The second model analyzes whether the same three independent variables affect the interaction between CSOs and the government. The proxy used to measure the interaction with the government is also a dummy variable coded as one for organizations

that reported to the ICT Survey to have interacted with governmental organizations and public authority accessed governmental sites for lobbying purposes. As reported in Table 2, there is shows a highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) correlation with positive effects between having a website and owning a Facebook account, on the one hand, and the dependent variable, on the other. Twitter, however, is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) in a lower confidence level, yet with positive effects.

Based on the results, we conclude that CSOs that have an institutional website have higher chances of interacting with the government. The results are at the highest level of confidence (99.9 percent). The same occurs with CSOs that own a Facebook account: organizations with such a characteristic have higher chances than others of interacting online with state authorities. Twitter accounts also have a positive correlation with the descriptive variable, yet the level of confidence is lower (95 percent).

As in the first model, control variables have a significant and positive impact on interaction with the government. Some of them, indeed, corroborate conventional wisdom. Given that funding from any governmental level (local, state, and federal) has a positive and significant impact upon the likelihood of interacting with state institutions as a whole, it is plausible considering at this stage that there might be a mere correlation rather than any causal logics between those controls and the dependent variable. Yet, the positive impact of other sources of funding suggest that diversified sources increases the capacity of a CSO in interacting with the government as much as online presence. Receiving voluntary donations and funding from private companies also increase the probability of interacting with government.

Other controls, however, have counterintuitive effects. First, we highlight the fact that a CSO with religion purposes decreases the probability of interacting with the government. This is a puzzling result considering the growing role of religious groups in

politics and policymaking in Brazil since redemocratization during the 1980s. Second, there is a negative effect on interacting with government through internet whenever the NGO is based at a developed region (with 95 percent of confidence). Such a result indicates a lower dependence of NGOs located in those regions on government for developing their activities, yet further conclusions depends on the realization of case studies, which have not been conducted at this stage of the project.

The third model, which scrutinizes the interaction between CSOs and society, are the ones in which the independent variables have the most counterintuitive results. As mentioned in the previous section, we measure interaction with society by coding one for organizations that have volunteers and zero for otherwise. The only explanatory variable that shows a highly significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) with positive coefficient is Facebook. Having website and a Twitter account presented a negative coefficient, highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) effect for website and only significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) for Twitter. Having a website diminishes (with 99.9 percent of confidence) the probability that a NGO has at least a volunteer—a surprising result considering that being at the web could attract more supporters. Yet, this seems to happen through Facebook, as owning an account in that social network increases the number of volunteers (with 99.9 percent of confidence). Twitter accounts, however, the opposite effect, with a negative effect upon the dependent variable (99 percent of confidence).

Differently from the two first models, most control variables have no significant effects. The only exception is SourceDonation, which measures funding coming from voluntary donations. The variable increases (at the 99.9 percent confidence level) the likelihood that a CSO interacts with society. Considering the lack of significant effects of other sources of funding in this model, we interpret such a result as an indication that NGOs least dependent on state resources have to look for societal sources of funding,

which in turn fosters further ties with society in the form of volunteer workers. In addition, when the NGO has a religious focus, there is a positive effect on the dependent variable, yet the level of significance is the lowest (90 percent only).

For the sake of checking the robustness our findings, we also run expanded models with interaction terms between the most significant independent variable (ownership of a Facebook account) and three controls (ReligiousCSO, DevelopedRegion, SourceDonation). We selected those controls to create the interactions because they had either significant effects on all three core models or yielded counterintuitive results. Table 3 reports the results considering the interaction terms between the controls and the Facebook dummy without dropping the variables of the core models, following the recommendation of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006). It is noteworthy that these models did not render significant changes in the main results concerning to the three independent variables, confirming our former findings. Out of the three proxies introduced in the expanded models, only one has a significant result equal or higher than at the 95 percent level of confidence: the interaction term between the ownership of a Facebook account by CSOs and the collection of voluntary donations impacts the capacity of interacting online with the government.

**Table 3.** Expanded Models

Models	(1)	(2)	(3)
	PartCSOInt	InteractGov	InteractSoc
	<b>Independent Variables</b>		
Website	0.494**** (0.0517)	0.242**** (0.0458)	-0.188**** (0.0501)
Facebook	0.262**** (0.0982)	0.415**** (0.0829)	0.239**** (0.0857)
Twitter	0.365**** (0.0643)	0.146** (0.0661)	-0.201*** (0.0683)
Facebook*ReligiousCSO	-0.0594	-0.0484	0.0156

	(0.131)	(0.122)	(0.156)
Facebook*DevelopedRegion	0.0661	-0.0476	-0.0788
	(0.101)	(0.0873)	(0.0949)
Facebook*SourceDonation	-0.195*	-0.185**	0.105
	(0.104)	(0.0902)	(0.101)
<b>Controls</b>			
ReligiousCSO	0.537****	-0.346****	0.123
	(0.105)	(0.0941)	(0.117)
DevelopedRegion	-0.148*	-0.0805	-0.0167
	(0.0796)	(0.0630)	(0.0680)
SourceFedGov	0.0804	0.416****	0.108
	(0.0749)	(0.0709)	(0.0714)
SourceStateGov	0.0870	0.306****	0.0815
	(0.0731)	(0.0678)	(0.0698)
SourceLocalGov	-0.148**	0.285****	0.0283
	(0.0651)	(0.0561)	(0.0603)
SourceForeignGov	1.433****	0.407**	-0.0436
	(0.153)	(0.176)	(0.167)
SourceIGO	0.755****	0.398**	0.201
	(0.153)	(0.191)	(0.180)
SourceDonation	0.279****	0.275****	0.894****
	(0.0824)	(0.0654)	(0.0738)
SourceMkt	0.0964*	0.204****	0.00485
	(0.0558)	(0.0512)	(0.0550)
year2012	0.118**	0.0231	0.0497
	(0.0488)	(0.0430)	(0.0470)
Constant	-1.560****	-0.183***	0.247****
	(0.0804)	(0.0619)	(0.0647)
Log-Likelihood	-1814.531	-2454.6123	-2018.9403
Observations	4,165	4,168	4,093

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

Yet, the correlation of the interaction Facebook\*SourceDonation with the dependent variable in model 2 is *negative*, a very much counterintuitive result considering that owning a Facebook account and receiving donations isolated still impact positively the same dependent variable. The result may indicate that voluntary donations and use of social media do not suffice to increase CSO capacity: other elements of the social environment, particularly funding from more powerful actors—such as governments and IGOs—seem to be necessary to enhance outreach.



### **Conclusion**

Our analysis has focused the impact of the ICTs upon the capacity of CSOs in interacting with other actors. Based on the Brazilian case, we built three different models to assess whether organizations that own websites, Facebook or Twitter accounts have higher chances of establishing connections with foreign counterparts, the government, and individuals at the domestic level. We departed from the literature on the topic, focused mainly on cases in the Global North and China, considering that the Internet is a space for interaction rather than conflict among different type of actors through the reduction of communication costs. Our main finding is that owning a Facebook account positively impacts a CSO's capacity of interacting with all three types of actors we work with. Counterintuitively, having a website and a Twitter account only has a positive correlation in building links with foreign CSOs and the government. Both independent variables negatively impact the interaction with individuals in the domestic society, a concept translated into the capacity of the organization in recruiting volunteer workers.

At least two main issues arise from these findings. First, in the view of the result of this paper, it is necessary to understand why different forms of online interaction— websites and social media—have distinct impacts upon CSO capacity in establishing transnational links and domestic ones with both government and society actors. While our models contribute to advancing the debates on the use of ICTs by CSOs and their impact on different levels of governance, they fall short of providing a full account of the causal mechanisms behind the correlations we found. Further qualitative research has to be carried out to tackle such a limitation in more detail. Second, specifically in the Brazilian case, it is worth analyzing whether CSOs digital influence depends on the level of autonomy of the bureaucracy, which has significant variance even at the federal branch of government (Bersch, Praça, and Taylor 2016). Again, in this case, qualitative work

focusing specific cases in the Brazilian state seem to be the most appropriate strategy to accomplish such a task.

Finally, the significant impact of control variables that were not the focus of the paper prompt the generation of new hypotheses on the limits of ICTs in enhancing CSO action in the three dimensions of the global arena of power (transnational, governmental, and societal). As models with interaction terms did not remove the effects of those controls in core models, it is plausible to conclude on a preliminary basis that organizations' characteristics and sources of funding have independent effects on CSO capacity of interacting in those three dimensions. Rather than creating a separate world, ICTs—including social media—do not trump conventional constraints and, depending on how CSOs are socially embedded, may have counterproductive effects in empowering civil society vis-à-vis governance structures.

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