Democratic representation without elections?

Understanding non-elected representatives in governance networks

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Summary

The growing importance of non-state actors in politics, who are often included in networks with public actors, has led several scholars to challenge the idea that representation is limited to traditional representative institutions. Instead, representation is now understood as an ongoing process in which the content of representation is negotiated via interactions between representatives and their constituents. Rather than being a rigid product of elections, representation happens as elected and non-elected actors make claims to represent the interests of someone or something. Consequently, representation as a claim-making process devalues the democratic process of elections.

The position of understanding representation as a dynamic, interactive, and deliberative process in which elections no longer are the only route to democratic representation has received increasing theoretical acceptance. However, there is scarce empirical evidence on how this activity, especially among non-elected representatives in governance networks, plays out in practice in present-day democracies. To bridge this research gap in my thesis, I addressed the following overarching research question:

> *How does non-electoral representation play out as an interactive activity in governance networks in present-day democracies, and under which conditions is this form of representation democratic?*

Governance networks are critical in studying democratic representation because they play a significant role in solving complex contemporary problems. In addition, non-elected representatives participating in institutionalised governance networks operate in spaces of power, which means that they, like elected representatives, should be subject to democratic standards.

Based on a mixed-methods approach that includes survey data, interviews, public documents and participant observation, this thesis demonstrates that in the governance networks of present-day democracies, representation plays out as an iterative process whereby most of what needs representation and what is represented develops through negotiations (or representatives explaining and justifying their actions to constituents) in response to constantly changing situations.

Defining democratic representation as constituents' acceptance of representative claims (Saward, 2010), I explore the conditions that enable constituents to judge (i.e. accept or reject) representatives. This thesis shows that representatives emphasise authorisation, while constituents stress the deliberative aspects of accountability that promote the constituents' judgements of the representatives. From the perspective of the constituents, defined as those judging democratic representation, deliberative accountability is essential in discussing the conditions under which non-electoral representation is democratic. The deliberative aspects of accountability entail regular interactions between representatives and constituents, allowing the former to explain the reasons for their actions and gain acceptance from the latter. Thus, I suggest that non-electoral representation is democratic under the

condition of representatives forming, practising and maintaining an interactive, deliberative and discussion-based representative–constituent relationship.

Furthermore, this thesis argues that representatives' commitment to engage with the deliberative aspects of accountability depends on the homogeneity of their constituents. This finding implies that an interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship cannot replace elections as a condition for democratic representation without the pre-existence of political equality among affected constituents. However, my findings show that the decision-making authority (i.e., the audience being the targets of representation) assess representatives' authenticity, the information contained in representatives' justification of claims and non-electoral authorisation to judge the representatives. Therefore, audiences' judgements can supplement the interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship as part of democratic representation when constituents have unequal resources to accept representation.

Overall, these empirical findings demonstrate that governance networks as arenas that allow democratic non-elected representatives to establish a broader representation of diverse interests in politics can help democratise the way in which modern societies are governed.

Content

PART ONE

1 Introduction

'We represent ourselves, but we also represent an industry. If you ask [the Chairperson], he would have said that we represent the grandchildren. We try to think bigger than ourselves; that is the conclusion.'

(Company Director, interview, 30 January 2020)

1.1 Topic

This statement by a major Norwegian transport company director shows that today numerous forms of representation can be described as non-electoral. For example, consider the representative impact of such figures as Greta Thunberg or organisations as Greenpeace or Save the Children. The increasing importance of non-state actors in politics challenges the account of representation according to which someone is elected to stand for or act on behalf of a territorially defined constituency. The inclusion of private interests in networks with public actors creates institutionalised spheres in which non-elected actors behave as representatives. The growing number of such networks, which contribute to problem-solving along with traditional bureaucracies, requires new ways of conceptualising the link between political representation and elections (de Wilde, 2019; Saward, 2010; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

In this political landscape, representation is increasingly accepted as an ongoing interaction whereby representatives and their constituents negotiate what needs to be represented (Saward, 2010; Severs, 2010; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Rather than being a rigid product of elections, representation happens as individual or collective actors make claims to represent the interests of someone (Saward, 2010). Although elections remain critical for legitimising state power, political representation is no longer defined by or limited to traditional representative institutions (Severs, 2020; Urbinati, 2011; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

Research on representation as a dynamic, interactive, and deliberative process has mainly been theoretical, contrasting the idea of interactive representation with different models of democracy (Kuyper, 2016; Urbinati, 2011; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). These studies examine the concept of representation, or representative claim-making (de Wilde, 2013; Disch, 2015; Severs, 2010; Wolkenstein & Wratil, 2021), and normatively explore the idea of democratic representation when the election process is weakened by the presence of non-elected representatives (Almeida, 2019; Castiglione, 2020; Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Disch, 2011; Dovi, 2018; Knappe, 2017; Kuyper, 2016; Maia, 2012; Montanaro, 2012, 2017, 2019; Näsström, 2015; Nuske, 2022; Severs & Dovi, 2018). Overall, normative assessments show that even though non-electoral representation challenges existing

conceptions of democratic representation, non-elected representatives complement elected representatives, and their democratic legitimacy can be judged at the relational or systemic level (Kuyper, 2016; Montanaro, 2017; Severs, 2020; Taylor, 2017; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

In general, there is scarce empirical evidence to support the theoretical debate on interactive representation. Among the existing studies, there is an overabundance of single-case studies that explore the idea of an elected or non-elected claim-maker (i.e. the representative) by analysing the process, content, contribution and justification of the claim to represent others (Denters et al., 2020; Guasti & Almeida, 2019; Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Heinisch & Werner, 2019; Knappe, 2021; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018b; Zicman de Barros, 2021). Some empirical studies have investigated democratic (mostly non-electoral) representation in terms of authorisation, accountability, authenticity and the information contained in representative claims (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; de Wilde, 2019; Knappe, 2017; Kuyper & Bäckstrand, 2016; Schlozman et al., 2015; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018a). However, such studies are even fewer than those investigating the claim-making process more generally.

In this thesis, I study democratic representation in local governance networks (i.e. organised by the municipality). It is critical to investigate such networks, defined as 'self-regulating horizontal articulations of interdependent, but operationally autonomous, actors from the public and private sectors' (Sørensen & Torfing, 2018), because their increasing use in solving complex problems including undemocratic non-elected representatives may result in unequal opportunities for citizens to influence decision-making. Another aspect that makes governance networks particularly interesting is the fact that they are often institutionalised to contribute to the production of public purpose (Sørensen & Torfing, 2018; Torfing & Sørensen, 2014). By being network members, often invited to participate by governments, non-elected actors have an opportunity to impact decision-making (i.e. rules, laws, regulations and decisions affecting others). Thus, in networks, non-elected representatives hold political power and should be subject to democratic standards. Ensuring that non-elected representatives are democratic is essential for a well-functioning representative democracy (Kuyper, 2016). Only Chapman and Lowndes (2014), and to a lesser degree Knappe (2017), have studied democratic representation in the context of governance networks.

1.2 Research questions

To bridge the gap between the expanding theoretical discussion on representation as a dynamic, interactive, and deliberative process and the scarce empirical evidence on how this interactive representative–constituent relationship plays out in practice via governance networks, particularly in a democratic manner, the overarching research question in this thesis is as follows:

How does non-electoral representation play out as an interactive activity in governance networks in present-day democracies, and under which conditions is this form of representation democratic?

Non-elected representatives are non-state actors who are disconnected from the political authority of formal institutions and who have the political power to influence and shape public discussions rather than the legislative process (Kuyper, 2016; Montanaro, 2012, 2017). Interactive representation is the act of making, revising and remaking claims to stand for affected or potentially affected groups or causes before a decision-making authority (Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Saward, 2010; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018a). Thus, the central actors examined in this thesis are (1) those who claim to represent others (i.e. *the maker* of representation, or a representative), (2) the affected or potentially affected groups or causes (i.e. *the object* represented, or a constituent) and (3) the decision-making authority receiving or observing a representative claim (i.e. *the audience*).

Representation is democratic when there is evidence of constituents accepting representation claims (Saward, 2010). Therefore, I examine the conditions under which constituents judge (i.e. accept) representatives. For a condition to enable constituents' judgement, the representative, the constituents and the audience must have a fairly common understanding of what interactive representation entails and how acceptance can be conveyed. To capture the perspectives of all three actor types, I formulated the following sub-questions:

1. *How do non-elected representatives and their constituents perceive representation, and what do such perceptions reveal regarding the conditions under which non-elected representatives are considered democratic?*
2. *What distinguishes non-elected representatives' perception of representation from that of elected representatives, and what do such differences reveal regarding the conditions under which representatives are considered democratic?*
3. *How do audiences understand non-electoral representation, and under which conditions do they acknowledge non-elected representatives as democratic?*

The three articles investigate the interactive activity of representation and the conditions under which non-electoral representation is perceived as democratic in the context of governance networks. Consequently, all articles rely on the theoretical framework of Saward (2009, 2010) and contribute to the literature on governance and interactive, shifting and negotiated representation. What distinguishes the articles from one another is the focus on which actors are involved in interactive representation practices. Therefore, the articles nuance the theoretical discussion on representation by providing empirical insights into the same topic from different perspectives. Table 1 summarises how the three articles comprising this thesis are related to the research questions.

Table 1. Overview of the articles in relation to the research questions

	Article 1	**Article 2**	**Article 3**
Actors focused on	Non-elected representatives, constituents and audiences	Elected and non-elected representatives	Audiences
Connection to the overarching research question	Understanding representation as an interactive activity and democratic non-electoral representation conditions	Understanding representation as an interactive activity and democratic representation conditions	Democratic non-electoral representation conditions
Targeted sub-question	1 and 3	2	3

As shown in Table 1, **Article 1** studies all actor types involved in representative claim-making. By exploring these actors' understandings of representation, this article discusses the conditions that enable constituents' judgements. **Article 2** focuses on representatives, their interactive representation practices and how these practices promote constituents' judgement. Finally, **Article 3** examines decision-making audiences and them judging the representatives as a condition for democratic representation. Thus, all three articles are essential to answering the overarching research question because they bring together the necessary perceptions of all the actors involved in the interactive, creative and negotiated representation process. Combining the views of these actors is key to understanding the conditions under which constituents accept representation – in other words, the conditions of democratic representation.

1.3 Contributions

Studying democratic representation in governance networks, this thesis combines the literature on governance from public administration studies with recent theories of representation from comparative politics and political theory. Accordingly, this thesis contributes to several literatures. Concerning the representation literature, by merging the perspectives of makers, subjects and audiences, this thesis provides an empirical operationalisation of the theoretical framework of claim-making. This framework has proven to be relatively complex when it comes to empirical research, and the concepts of maker, subject, object and audience have been insufficiently operationalised (de Wilde, 2013; Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Severs, 2020). In this thesis, makers, or the elected or non-elected representatives, are defined as public and private actors participating in governance networks. The literature distinguishes between makers and subjects (i.e. the makers themselves and the group identities that the claim-makers are associated with) (Saward, 2010). However, when studying non-elected group representatives, my

findings suggest that, similar to de Wilde (2013), claim makers and subjects (i.e. individual network participants and their organisations, causes or groups) should not be treated separately. Objects, or constituencies, are members, followers or subscribers of participating groups or organisations (i.e. employers, employees, clients, companions and citizens) and constitute the directly affected people (Torfing et al., 2009). Finally, following Guasti and Geissel (2019), I define the audience as the decision-making authority composed of the civil servants and politicians initiating and managing governance networks, selecting participants and participating in the networks. Table 2 summarises my empirical operationalisations of the four terms.

Table 2. Empirical operationalisations of the maker, subject, object and audience concepts

Maker	**Subject**	**Object**	**Audience**
Elected and non-elected representatives		Constituents	Decision-making authorities
Participants in governance networks		Members, subscribers, followers, employers, employees, clients, companions and citizens	Politicians and civil servants initiating and organising networks

In addition, this thesis also contributes to the literature on democratic representation by nuancing the complex category of the non-elected representative. Throughout my thesis, I distinguish between non-elected group representatives (with and without members) and non-elected individual representatives. Differentiating representative types facilitates a more targeted identification of the conditions for democratic representation. Further details on the differences between representative types can be found in Section 2.3.1.

Combining perspectives from public administration and political theory scholarship also provides new insights into how networks can complement representative democracy. In governance networks, non-elected representatives tend to represent the interests marginalised by the representative government. Representing these marginalised interests democratically means that a broader range of voices is heard in politics, which ensures better policy outcomes and a well-functioning representative democracy (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Näsström, 2015). Thus, governance networks may help democratise the governance of modern societies (Severs, 2020; Sørensen & Torfing, 2018; Taylor, 2017).

Non-elected actors invited (and willing) to participate in governance networks are likely to be highly aware of their responsibilities as representatives and the power to influence decision-making that follows from participating in governance networks. They might be more reflexive than non-elected

representatives without governance networks. Studying reflexive non-elected actors may reduce the chances of generalising this thesis's findings beyond non-elected representatives in governance networks. However, non-elected representatives invited into spaces of power similar to governance networks, such as expert committees, contract-based public-private partnerships, and thinktanks in which private actors draft public laws (Kuyper, 2016), may be equally aware of their responsibilities and the subsequent political influence. Therefore, the findings may be generalisable to non-elected representatives in spaces of power to influence decision-making.

1.4 Outline

This thesis consists of two parts. Part 1 contains an extended introduction, while Part 2 consists of the three articles. Part 1 starts by explaining the theoretical framework used in the thesis. Then, I outline the empirical context before detailing my research approach. Once the research approach is presented, I summarise the three articles that constitute Part 2. At the end of Part 1, I provide a concluding discussion on the conditions for democratic representation and reflect on future research avenues.

Part 2 consists of three articles analysing representation as an interactive activity along with the different conditions under which non-electoral representation is democratic. The three articles are as follows:

Article 1. Fossheim, K. (2022). How can non-elected representatives secure democratic representation? *Policy & Politics*, *50*(2), 243–260. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557321X16371011677734

Article 2. Fossheim, K. (under review). The contextuality of interactive representation: Are elections critical to democratic representation? *Political Studies*.

Article 3. Fossheim, K. (2022). The responsibility of an audience: Assessing the legitimacy of non-elected representatives in governance networks. *Representation*, *58*(2), 211–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2021.1933150

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I first present the criticism that governance networks undermine representative democracy (Mair, 2013), arguing that non-elected network actors may function as representatives if they are subject to democratic standards and may establish networks that complement representative democracy. Then, I discuss how recent developments in representation theory provide an opening for such non-electoral representation.

Saward's (2009, 2010) idea of representation as a dynamic, interactive, and deliberative process of claim-making underpins the theoretical framework of this thesis. Saward's work is supplemented by several more recent theoretical discussions on legitimate democratic representation (see Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Dovi, 2018; Kuyper, 2016; Montanaro, 2012, 2017, 2019; Naurin & Reh, 2018; Russo & Cotta, 2020; Severs, 2020; Sørensen, 2020).

2.1 The democratic impact of governance networks

The introduction of relevant societal actors into governance networks contains democratising potential by increasing and expanding participation as well as intensifying political competition (Sørensen & Torfing, 2018). Providing relevant actors with a channel (in addition to elections) to exercise political influence by formulating, implementing and adjusting policy solutions can improve the quality and effectiveness of public governance. However, although governance networks may democratise public governance by enhancing participation, such networks' composition, membership selection and political function are not necessarily democratic. Thus, governance networks tend to exist at the expense of democratic principles (Skelcher et al., 2005; Sørensen & Torfing, 2018).

In the literature on the democratic impact of governance networks, the inclusion of 'most adult permanent residents' or 'all of the affected interests or stakeholders' is the most frequently discussed democratic norm (Klinke, 2017). In general, inclusion studies have found that governance networks struggle with this principle (Bassoli, 2010; Hansen, 2007; Klinke, 2017; Torfing et al., 2012). The most active network members are often industry and government elites with a high self-interest in participating (Derkzen & Bock, 2009; Hendriks, 2008). Thus, network discussions tend to be technical or expert based and exclude disadvantaged interests (Davies, 2007). Although the literature has suggested that the democratic character of governance networks can be improved by strengthening the role of politicians, one general conclusion is that many governance networks possess a technocratic structure (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012; Sherlock et al., 2004).

The second most discussed norm concerning the struggles of government networks with representative democracy is accountability (Aars & Fimreite, 2005; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007;

Nyholm & Haveri, 2009). Government control of governance networks is lacking (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007; Nyholm & Haveri, 2009), and there are few opportunities for citizens to control what network participants say or do (Papadopoulos, 2003; Pierre, 2009). In fact, the network structure challenges the very definition of accountability holdees and holders (Aarsæther et al., 2009; Boase, 2008; Skelcher, 2010). In addition, the complex character of networks challenges the notions of transparency, visibility and access to information, leading to a public debate on network processes and outcomes, which is a prerequisite for accountability (Aarsæther et al., 2009; Papadopoulos, 2017; Torfing et al., 2012).

With the discussion focusing on networks' struggles with representative democracy in relation to inclusion and accountability, I suggest approaching this issue differently and treating non-elected actors in networks as representatives of marginalised interests. Defining non-elected representatives as representing the interests marginalised by the representative government (Severs, 2020; Taylor, 2017) implies that governance networks, as an arena for such representatives, may help democratise the way in which modern societies are governed. However, several scholars have argued that for governance networks to complement representative democracy, non-electoral representation should be democratic (Montanaro, 2012). Thus, by studying the conditions for democratic non-electoral representation, this thesis provides insights into possible ways of overcoming governance networks' struggles with representative democracy.

2.2 The standard account of representation

Pitkin's (1967) representation analysis established what is known as the standard account of representation (Rehfeld, 2006). After examining the classics of Hobbes, Madison and Burke, Pitkin described representation as a principal–agent relationship in which constituencies territorially elect actors to stand for and act on their interests and opinions (Disch, 2015; Saward, 2010, p. 10; Urbinati, 2011; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). In such a unidirectional representative–constituent relationship, representatives respond to the predefined preferences of citizens, who ultimately determine the representatives' positions (Russo, 2020; Russo & Cotta, 2020).

In this framework, constituents use elections to delegate authority to representatives or to trust representatives with the authority to act on their behalf. Wielding this delegated authority, representatives work under a specific mandate provided by constituencies and are responsive to sanctions (Rehfeld, 2006; Russo & Cotta, 2020; Sørensen, 2020; Taylor, 2017). The representatives trusted with authority use their judgements regarding the proper course of action and are less responsive to sanctions (Rehfeld, 2009). Based on the idea of unidirectional representation, Mansbridge (2003, 2009) and Rehfeld (2006) expanded the standard account of representation beyond this delegate–trustee dichotomy. Mansbridge introduced the idea that representatives can represent constituents' interests

without an electoral relationship. At the same time, Rehfeld (2006) argued that even dictators function as political representatives of their dictatorship – for example, in the United Nations.

2.3 Representation as a dynamic interactive process

Mansbridge's (2003, 2009) and Rehfeld's (2006) contributions to the theoretical discussion on representation mark the beginning of an interactive, or constructivist, turn in the representation literature. Responding to a changing political landscape and a representative democracy in crisis, even more scholars have argued that representation is the outcome of a process of mutual adjustments between representatives and constituents (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Disch, 2015; Fossen, 2019; Saward, 2009, 2010; Severs, 2010; Sørensen, 2020; Taylor, 2010, 2017; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). In short, the interests represented are negotiated and developed in the process of representation (Saward, 2010).

Representatives and constituents enter such deliberative negotiations with their previous experiences, values and attributes (Browne, 2020; Disch, 2015; Naurin & Reh, 2018; Saward, 2010). Each party may actively persuade the other, shaping each other's preferences in developing a collective understanding of what needs representation (Russo & Cotta, 2020). Thus, predefined interests do not determine what is represented (Disch, 2015; Saward, 2010). The idea is that inclusive, respectful and open communication with a mutual understanding of the other's positions (i.e., deliberative negotiations) makes it possible to account for different interests (Naurin & Reh, 2018).

Saward (2010, p. 36) operationalised this interactive form of representation as a process of claim-making in which '*the maker* of representations puts forward *a subject* which stands for *an object* that is related to a referent and is offered to *an audience*'. As discussed in Chapter 1, this thesis is structured around these different types of actors. All actors are described in Section 1.2 and operationalised in Section 1.3 (see Table 2).

2.3.1 Non-elected representatives

Representation as claim-making is not restricted to voting and formal electoral institutions (Saward, 2010). Therefore, the interactive aspect of representation entails the recognition of the representative role of non-elected actors (Montanaro, 2012, 2017; Saward, 2010). Non-elected representatives include everything and everyone from interest groups, private businesses and media outlets to single individuals such as experts, spiritual leaders, political activists or celebrities (Browne, 2020; Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; de Wilde, 2019; Guasti & Almeida, 2019; Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Saward, 2010).

Non-elected representatives are a broad category, and treating them uniformly is problematic (Kuyper, 2016). Therefore, I distinguish between group and individual non-elected representatives (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Schlozman et al., 2015). More specifically, non-elected representatives from membership-based organisations and organisations without members in the ordinary sense are *non-elected group representatives*, while single individuals acting as non-elected representatives are *non-elected individual representatives*. The membership organisations examined in the three articles comprising this thesis were traditional interest groups (i.e. labour, employer, religious, youth, community and commerce groups). Organisations without members were employers in politically active businesses and administrative bodies in public entities, such as government agencies, universities or hospitals. Compared to organisations without members, membership-based organisations may have more experience playing a representative role and, as such, may have established internal democratic processes (Binderkrantz, 2009). Furthermore, the two categories of non-elected group representatives also differed in the uniformity of their constituencies. Therefore, the distinction between these two groups is essential, as non-elected representatives with members may share more characteristics with elected representatives than those without members. Finally, single individuals were experts, spokespersons of specific groups and private individuals. This group of non-elected representatives has relatively undefined constituencies. Table 3 summarises the different representative types studied in this thesis.

Table 3. Representative types

Elected representatives	**Non-elected group representatives**		**Non-elected individual representatives**
Elected representatives	Non-elected representatives from membership-based organisations	Non-elected representatives from organisations without members	Non-elected individual representatives
Politicians	Interest groups	Business and public entities	Experts, celebrities, political activists, private individuals and citizens

2.3.2 Democratic representation

Treating representation as a dynamic, interactive, and deliberative activity involving non-elected actors as political representatives entails that non-electoral alternatives are necessary to ensure democratic representation (Kuyper, 2016; Montanaro, 2017). Consequently, elections lose ground as the normative ideal of democratic representation (Disch, 2015; Zicman de Barros, 2021). However, my purpose in

this thesis is not to argue that traditional institutions are no longer critical to democratic representation; rather, I am to show the democratic potential of non-electoral alternatives.

This thesis is underpinned by Saward's (2010) conception of democratic representation whereby 'acceptable claims to democratic legitimacy are those for which there is evidence of sufficient acceptance of claims by appropriate constituencies under reasonable conditions of judgement' (p. 145). When ordinary citizens (i.e. the constituents) accept being represented, representation is democratic (de Wilde, 2019). Thus, as constituents are said to judge democratic representation, researchers have explored the conditions that enable constituents to make such judgements (de Wilde, 2019; Disch, 2011; Saward, 2010). In this thesis, following these definitions, I examine the conditions that promote constituents' judgements (i.e. acceptance or rejection) of their representatives. Therefore, this thesis involves a normative analysis that constructs the ideals of a perfect world. Combining discussions on the normative principles of democratic representation with empirical insights into the representatives', constituents' and audiences' understandings of these principles clarifies the behaviours of different actors and advances the discussion on democratic representation.

In the discussion on democratically legitimate forms of representation, concepts such as legitimate representation, democratic representation, democratically legitimate representation, representatives' democratic legitimacy and good representation are used interchangeably (Ziemann, 2014). To avoid confusion, in this thesis, I employ the concept of *democratic representation*. However, the connotation is slightly different in **Article 3** compared to **Articles 1** and **2**.

Discussing the conditions for constituents' judgements, Severs (2020) categorised the scholars working on this issue into three groups. The first two groups explore aspects that balance power in the representative–constituent relationship enabling constituents' judgements, while the third group observes how existing institutions in the representative system enable constituents to judge their representatives (Severs, 2020; Severs & Dovi, 2018). The articles in this thesis can be positioned within the group studying democratic representation focusing on the representative–constituent relationship. However, in Chapter 5 in this extended introduction, I attempt to connect the relational with the more systemic approach to democratic representation. Both these aspects and how they are used in each article are explained in the following paragraphs.

The first condition enabling constituents to judge their representatives is the existence of functional alternatives to elections that ensure representatives are acting in ways that promote their constituents' interests while being authorised by and accountable to their constituents (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Montanaro, 2012, 2017, 2019; Mulieri, 2013; Severs, 2020; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). According to the standard account of representation, authorisation involves expressing consent by signalling acceptance. Thus, accountability involves a deliberative aspect of accounting for the actions of representatives and controlling, sanctioning or holding the representatives accountable

(Montanaro, 2012, 2017, 2019). In a non-electoral context, the mechanisms of authorisation and accountability are organisational or discursive rather than electoral (Montanaro, 2012, 2017). Organisational authorisation involves joining the organisation, contributing financially and voting within the organisation. The constituency can discursively authorise its representative through public agreement – for example, by sharing ideas on social media that strengthen the representative's public reputation. The deliberative aspect of accountability is encouraged by representatives explaining and justifying their actions in general meetings or public debates (van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018; Montanaro, 2019). Constituents can use their organisations to hold representatives accountable by expressing disapproval by withdrawing their membership, followership or monetary contributions. Discursive ways of controlling representatives entail constituents expressing public disagreement and thus undermining their representatives' reputations (Montanaro, 2012, 2017, 2019). Thus, in **Articles 1** and **2**, I explore an outcome of the representative–constituent relationship that benefits the constituency, authorisation and accountability as conditions promoting constituents' (and audiences') capabilities to judge their representatives (Montanaro, 2017, p. 65, 2019, p. 195).

Representatives must mobilise their constituents to receive, agree with, object to and contest what is represented (Disch, 2011). Therefore, representatives' mobilisation efforts' constitute the second condition enabling constituents to judge their representatives (de Wilde, 2019; Severs, 2020). Representatives can promote constituents' judgement by (1) being authentic by seeking apparent and constant consent from their constituents (Saward, 2009); (2) promoting accountability by listening to their constituents and fostering the constituents' autonomy to endorse or reject what is represented (Dovi, 2018; Mansbridge, 2003); (3) generating political equality among affected citizens (Näsström, 2015); (4) providing rich, clear and explicit information on accountability, justifications and conflicts when expressing what is represented (de Wilde, 2019); and (5) engaging in representation practices in a manner that is genuine, communicative, responsive, knowledgeable, open, honest, charismatic and connected with their constituents (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014). In **Article 3**, I combine several theories (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; de Wilde, 2019; Dovi, 2018; Mansbridge, 2003; Saward, 2009) on audiences' judgements.

Existing institutions in the representative system constitute the third condition enabling constituents to make judgements (Nuske, 2022; Severs, 2020). For example, a system of political representation that provides constituents with the capacity and opportunities to raise their voices and have control over collective decisions, facilitates equal inclusion and allows for reflexive political judgement (Castiglione, 2020, p. 30). Thus, a political system promoting deliberation and discursive accountability is a condition for constituents' judgements of their representatives (Maia, 2012). Democratic representation, then, depends on the institutional design facilitating deliberation processes and the quality of such deliberations (Nuske, 2022). Deliberation that is authentic (i.e. noncoercive, generalisable and acceptable), consequential (reflecting changing preferences) and equally inclusive

ensures democratic representation (Kuyper, 2016). Alternatively, forums for exchange and education, a clear decision-making system and grassroots involvement are organisational attributes that may mobilise constituents to judge their representatives (Nuske, 2022). As mentioned, this systemic approach is included in Chapter 5.

3 Research approach

Using quantitative and qualitative data from the three articles, this thesis employs a mixed-methods approach to study non-electoral representation in governance networks. Table 4 presents an overview of each article's research approach, research design and methods.

Table 4. Overview of the research approach in the three articles

	Article 1	**Article 2**	**Article 3**
Research approach	Qualitative	Quantitative	Qualitative
Research design	Case study	Survey research	Case study
Methods	Semi-structured interview data	Attitude data	Semi-structured interview data, document data and observation data

The following sections first describe the methods, the perspectives and the case selection processes. Then, I present the data sources, the data-collection processes and the analytical procedures. Finally, I discuss the research quality in terms of validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

3.1 A mixed-methods approach

When the combination of a case study and a survey enables a better understanding of the research question than either approach alone, mixing methods is appropriate (Creswell & Clark, 2010; Gerring, 2017, p. 156; Yin, 2017). A mixed-methods approach is particularly beneficial when the purpose is to understand and gain insight into a complex social phenomenon (Bryman, 2006). The dynamic, interactive, and deliberative character of representation examined in this thesis is highly complex, and the study of this phenomenon requires techniques that are accordingly broad and deep. With **Articles 1** and **3** being case studies of non-elected group representatives in governance networks and **Article 2** being a survey of all representatives in governance networks, this thesis employs a mixed-methods approach. In this thesis, the survey is nested within case studies (Yin, 2017). The case studies are used to describe and explore non-elected group representatives in relation to the theory of interactive representation, whereas the survey is used to assess the theory's explanatory power by discussing representation as an interactive activity and its consequences for democratic representation generally. As there are few empirical studies of democratic interactive representation, it was necessary to approach this topic qualitatively to understand the actors' views before generalising the findings in a quantitative study.

When conducting qualitative analysis and building quantitative research around these findings, I applied an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on the views of the representatives, constituents and the audience as revealed by my case studies, I identified suitable questions for the survey. The case studies played a seminal role in this thesis because I used the cases to identify the topic of democratic representation, which I later tested more broadly via the survey (Gerring, 2017; Yin, 2017).

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses in this thesis were based on actors' views of the studied situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of individuals' subjective accounts of their experiences reflects the constructivist underpinnings of the theory of representative claims (Fossen, 2019). A constructivist paradigm follows a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, when drawing inferences based on qualitative and quantitative data, I adopted a pragmatic outlook to derive knowledge on the representative claim framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Combining the inferences based on these research approaches constitutes the meta-inferences discussed in Chapter 5.

3.1.1 Case selection

This thesis examined non-elected group representatives in governance networks as a case study. These non-elected representatives were treated as a plausibility probe to sharpen the theory of democratic representation (George & Bennett, 2005; Levy, 2008). Non-elected group representatives were selected for an intensive case study because they have been found to over-represent advantaged sub-groups within their constituencies, which is the opposite of what democratic representation entails (Montanaro, 2017, 2019; Schlozman et al., 2015). Thus, non-elected group representatives in governance networks are also influential since they are seemingly unlikely to fit the theory (Gerring, 2017).

In **Articles 1** and **3**, the networks selected to study non-elected group representatives were non-statutory fora, partnerships, committees and collaborations organised around business and urban development. This policy area touches on commercial, environmental, social and land-use issues in city centres. In business and urban development, a lot is at stake economically for those affected, and there are potential conflicts concerning the content of representation. Therefore, this policy area is critical to studying democratic representation because there is a high probability of there being advantaged sub-groups with the power and resources to impact representation for their own benefit. **Article 1** studied three networks in Oslo, while **Article 3** examined three networks in Oslo, two in Kristiansand and two in Tromsø (seven networks in total). Even though these governance networks operated in different Norwegian cities, they generally functioned in the same context, being organised around issues that affected the same group of people and similar municipal agencies.

In contrast, the 46 networks in **Article 2** covered most policy areas in 16 European countries. The networks dealt with education and family, transportation, urban communities and neighbourhood development, employment and business, elderly health and medical care, justice, and culture and sports. The networks examined in this study ranged from statutory and formally mandated councils for the elderly, youth, disabled and minorities, to business and development councils and local action groups, to informal non-statutory sub-municipal or neighbourhood councils. Although these governance networks operated in different countries, were governed by different municipal agencies and focused on different policy areas, they were similar in being organised by municipalities and including public and private actors.

3.2 Data collection and analytical procedures

The data sources used to answer the overall research question consist of a survey, interviews, documents and observations. **Article 1** uses interview data, **Article 2** is based on attitudinal survey data and **Article 3** combines interview, document and observation data. The following sub-sections describe the data collection process and the analysis of the interviews, documents and observations, and the survey.

3.2.1 Interviews, documents and observations

In this thesis, the primary qualitative data source is semi-structured interviews with 51 interviewees conducted between December 2019 and November 2020. However, to supplement the interviews, I also analysed 69 relevant publicly available documents from 2015 to 2020 and observed two network meetings in February and March 2020.

Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes and was, with one exception, recorded electronically and fully transcribed. The interviews were conducted individually and in person in workplaces and online. The interview questions dealt with the representative responsibility, the construction of representation outcomes, reasons for accepting a representative, practised interaction and dialogue, openness to input, two-way communication and opportunities to hold and be held accountable. In addition, the decision-making authority was asked to comment on network actors' behaviours, such as their actions, spoken arguments and opinions expressed in the network. In general, the interview questions were formulated using neutral terms to encourage individual reflection.

The non-elected group representatives interviewed were network participants in management positions. Half came from organisations without members, such as businesses, universities, hospitals and non-profit foundations. The remaining respondents came from membership-based organisations, such as interest groups, employers' organisations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, real estate associations and city-centre retail, business and residents' associations.

Interviewing respondents from the constituency is challenging because, as explained in the theory, who constitute the constituents may change as what is represented and the networks' issues develop. Consequently, the constituency is somewhat less well represented in this study's sample. The interviewed constituents were members of interest groups and employees, customers or competitors from private businesses or public entities.

The audience consisted of civil servants and politicians initiating, organising and participating in the networks. Civil servants were over-represented among the respondents; however, civil servants rather than politicians are those whose daily responsibilities include managing the networks. Key information about all respondents is provided in Table 5. This table summarises to 59 respondents because some of the interviewed respondents considered themselves non-elected representatives and part of the constituency.

Table 5. Overview of interview respondents

	Non-elected representatives from interest groups	**Non-elected representatives from private businesses and public entities**	**Constituency**	**Audience**
Groups of actors	Interest groups	Private businesses, public entities	Members, employees, customers, clients, partners, competitors, investors, students, citizens, visitors	Civil servants, politicians
Position	CEO, managers	CEO, managers	Owner, manager, senior employee, senior member	Adviser, senior adviser, director
Number interviewed	10	10	13	26

Supplementing the interviews with public documents allowed me to capture the decision-making audience's general perspective. This combination of the data also allowed me to control for potential biases among my interviewed respondents. The documents included meeting minutes, agendas, presentations held at meetings and external seminars, and evaluation reports summarising the majority perception among the participants and what the network had agreed upon. The length of the documents varied from two to 100 pages; however, there was an overabundance of three-page documents. All documents were available from the municipalities' official websites and upon request at e-innsyn.no.

Table 6. Overview of analysed documents

Minutes	**Agendas**	**Plans, strategies, evaluation reports, council meeting records, and presentations**

31	10	28

During the interviews, respondents from the audience invited me to participate in network meetings. To further understand politicians' and civil servants' day-to-day activities in assessing democratic representation, I conducted participant observation of two network meetings. During the observation, I captured informal interactions and non-verbal communication between representatives and the audience that are not written down in public documents or expressed in interviews (Gobo & Molle, 2017). The observations lasted between two and three hours and were organised as a combination of presentations, question-and-answer sessions and group discussions. The goal of participating in these meetings was to observe how the decision-making audience received and processed the representative claims expressed by non-elected representatives. As the meetings were fairly large, my experience was that few of the participants recognised my presence.

For the theory-driven research questions, coding the qualitative data in NVivo was done deductively, and the codes in the coding protocol were operationalised according to theoretical definitions. For **Article 1,** data excerpts about 'spoken arguments, opinions and claims', the 'representative's actions' and 'expressed needs, interests and wants' were coded as *outcome of representation that benefits the constituency*. Extracts about 'supporting actions, selection and public agreement' were coded as *authorisation*. 'Information sharing, two-way communication and face-to-face dialogue' and 'opposing actions, public disagreement and adjustments in what is represented' were coded as *accountability*. In **Article 3**, all the data sources were coded according to credibility, qualifications and connectedness. Data excerpts regarding justifications for representation, such as a 'new and wider audience', 'self-representation', 'shared experiences, values and identity', 'societal position', 'specialist expertise' and 'tradition and moral', were coded as *credibility*. Extracts about 'collaborative experiences', 'charisma', 'communication skills' and 'truthfulness' were coded as *qualifications*. Information on 'adjusting actions', 'interaction with the constituency', 'dialogue', 'control' and 'visibility' was coded as *connectedness*.

3.2.2 Survey

To conduct the quantitative study, I used survey data from members of 46 governance networks in 16 European countries (Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland). The data were collected between November 2020 and July 2021 as part of the European project Local State-Society Relations (for further information, see Teles et al., 2020). A complete survey was distributed to the population of local networks identified as the most common by a local researcher in each country. These networks also had to include individual, collective and/or corporate societal actors and actors from the

municipality with a directly elected representative body taking binding decisions. Mapping the different types of governance networks at the local level is a relatively new undertaking (Teles et al., 2020b). Therefore, there is a chance that some relevant networks were excluded and that irrelevant networks were included in the dataset. However, the data constitute a starting point for a structured overview of European governance networks.

The same local researcher as the one mapping the local governance networks distributed the questionnaire. The contact information of those participating in a network was not always accessible or even publicly available. Therefore, the survey was distributed through a contact person, often the CEO, the network's chairperson or the individual responsible for the municipality's general contact email. These persons were asked to circulate the questionnaire to members of the studied networks.

As the survey was an online questionnaire distributed through a third person, and the population of network participants is unknown in most countries (Egner et al., in press) there was uncertainty about the response rate. Relying on previous research (Teles et al., 2020a), the estimated number of possible participants from eligible networks across all studied countries was 109,708. The number of registered questionnaires was 11,350; resulting in a response rate of 10 per cent. Overall, this relatively low response rate might have biased the thesis findings. Among the registered questionnaires several respondents dropped out after the first question. These respondents were treated as missing, and after being removed, 5,383 respondents fully completed the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were unequally distributed between the countries. Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium and Portugal were over-represented. I these issues further in Section 4.3.1 concerning the generalisability of the findings.

3.3 Research quality and ethical considerations

To assess the research quality of the present thesis, the following section discusses the external and internal validity and reliability of the research. In addition, I reflect on ethical considerations.

3.3.1 Validity

External validity refers to the possibility of generalising from a chosen case to a larger population of cases (Gerring, 2017). As case studies struggle with statistical generalisation to a larger population, the goal becomes to expand or explore theories – that is, analytical generalisation. Generalising to a larger population was the purpose of the survey reported and analysed in **Article 2** (George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2017).

Concerning the statistical generalisation of the survey findings to representatives in European governance networks, no network type (except for a slight over-representation of youth councils, councils for the elderly and local action groups) had significantly more responses than the others. Therefore, the collected data ensured the representativeness of the networks. In addition, the number of studied networks in each country was similar, ranging from two to five network types. However, readers should note that the basis for generalisation is weakened because France and Great Britain were not included in the survey and because the response rate was low, as discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition, the distribution of responses was skewed towards older respondents with higher education in Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium and Portugal. Although most older people with higher education likely participate in governance networks, the countries with a high response rate have a history of high civil society engagement, social trust and a historical tradition of pluralism and neo-corporatism (Knutsen, 2017). All these factors might overestimate the importance of representation, especially among non-elected representatives (Castiglione & Warren, 2019). At the same time, three of the countries with a high number of responses (i.e., Sweden, Finland, Norway) are networked societies, meaning that in these countries, many citizens participate in networks. Therefore, a high number of responses in these countries mirrors the share of the European population participating in networks, thus ensuring the representativeness of the data.

The purpose of the case studies in **Articles 1** and **3** was to explore rather than explain the theory of interactive democratic (primarily non-electoral) representation. Thus, the cases was selected not for their representativeness but to challenge and advance theoretical concepts (Mills et al., 2010). The case of non-elected group representatives indicated that resourceful sub-groups were over-represented in their constituencies. In addition, non-elected representatives in business and urban development networks with high economic stakes potentially represent powerful constituents with resources to pressure the representatives to accommodate their interests. As the theory suggests, it is unlikely that such representatives would enable all constituents to make judgements. Thus, this case can be considered an outlier, and the thesis findings may be analytically generalisable to situations likelier to fit the theory – for example, non-elected individual or non-elected group representatives with less powerful, individualistic and economically motivated constituents.

Internal validity considers whether the measures applied capture what they intend to investigate – that is, the accuracy of the measurement (Mosley, 2013; Yin, 2017), or the extent to which conclusions about causal relationships can be made in the studied sample (Gerring, 2017). Combining the survey data with the interview, document and observation data showed that the respondents understood the questions as intended (Lynch, 2013). Merging the attitudes and opinions of the respondents in the case of non-elected group representatives in Norwegian governance networks with general information on the population of non-elected representatives in European governance networks thus ensures the

accuracy of the findings. Using different data types to assess internal validity is one benefit of conducting a mixed-method study (Brewer & Hunter, 2005; Yin, 2017).

Furthermore, this thesis used self-reported data (the respondents' perceptions), which can threaten valid inferences because the data might contain biases. In addition, most of the respondents were elites who might have felt the need to respond in a socially desirable manner (Beckmann & Hall, 2013) when asked questions about democracy and representation.

In the survey, youth responses might have limited validity as the questions in the survey were rather complicated. Despite the survey questions being designed to capture the respondents' perceptions, I argue that in their answers, the respondents aimed to fulfil their roles as network members (and consequentially their roles as representatives), which means that the logic of appropriateness dominates the responses. Thus, the survey responses provide a reliable image of the respondents' self-perceptions.

To control for self-report bias in the interviews, I asked broad questions and approached the perceptions held by non-elected representatives from different angles. As internal validity in interview data also depends on whether the researcher is asking the right questions in the right way to gain truthful answers (Mosley, 2013), I interviewed the representatives, their constituents and the audience to gain multiple accounts of the same story. In addition, the respondents participated in more than one governance network. Conducting interviews with actors with the same role but operating in slightly different contexts enabled me to compare the collected data across interviews to check internal consistency.

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure and, thus, the confidence in the information collected (Mosley, 2013). In addition, reliable studies provide consistent findings and ensure transparency in data production and analysis (George & Bennett, 2005). Consequently, the data collection processes and analytical decisions made in this thesis were described in detail in the methods sections of each article.

To ensure the consistency of the findings and the potential replicability of the quantitative study, I ran multiple regression models with and without control variables. The goodness-of-fit of the different models was tested and reported in the supplementary material of **Article 3**. I also controlled for individual characteristics that could explain variations in the respondents' perceptions of representation. For replicability purposes, the dataset and R-scripts are available upon request.

To avoid biases when interpreting the qualitative data and thus improve reliability (George & Bennett, 2005), the interview documents and field notes were transcribed and coded based on the existing theory of representative claim-making and conditions for democratic representation. In general, the existing theory guided all qualitative analysis in this thesis. The documents used in **Article 3** are publicly

available and listed in the appendix. Reliability concerns in qualitative methods are also related to interviewer effects and positionality (Mosley, 2013). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to switch to digital interviews in the middle of the data collection process. With digital interviews, valuable metadata and supplementary coffee talk were lost. However, this interview form provided me with access to respondents in other areas of the country that would have been more difficult to reach in person.

In addition, I knew nine of the respondents from their roles as partners in previous research projects (Horizon 2020, Researcher Project, and Collaborative and Knowledge-Building Project). These relationships eased the process of gaining access to respondents and network meetings and provided me with more information than if I had been completely new to the field. Being acquaintances might also have led the respondents to modify their answers towards what they expected I should like to hear. However, the answers I received from the respondents I knew were similar to those from unknown respondents, which indicates that previous collaboration was not a problem.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

This research project was carried out according to recognised Norwegian ethical standards regarding data collection, informed consent, confidentiality and data storage (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 2022). In compliance with the Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology, the Local State-Society Relations dataset and the necessary documentation will be available online. The Norwegian Center for Research Data approved the research design and interview guide. The questionnaire was collected anonymously, without storing emails and IP addresses, names and indirectly identifiable information.

I encountered ethical issues when collecting survey data and conducting interviews to write this thesis. The main moral concern related to the survey was how and whether to distribute the questionnaire to youth, older respondents and people with disabilities – that is, to people from vulnerable groups. I believe it was essential to include youth, the elderly and people with disabilities in the survey because their perceptions as marginalised groups are essential to understanding representation and democracy. In addition, given that the approached respondents participated in governance networks, they were probably more resourceful than the average member of the groups they represented. All respondents answered the online questionnaire anonymously. At the same time, relying on an online questionnaire might have prevented some older respondents from answering. Overall, the participants were recruited voluntarily without compensation, which ensures reliable information motivated by the benefit of the research itself.

For the interviews, the main ethical concern had to do with access to the field. The interviewed respondents were recruited voluntarily. However, previous collaboration with some respondents in earlier research projects might have positively affected my access by making it difficult for them to decline an invitation to participate in the study. Therefore, to ensure confidentiality, the articles based on interviews omitted the networks' actual names and referred to the respondents by occupation when using quotations. In general, the respondents were given an information sheet and asked to provide written informed consent.

4 Overview of articles

This chapter briefly summarises the three articles contained in this thesis by describing the literature, the research question and some results. As mentioned in the Introduction, all three articles employed the same theoretical framework and belonged to the same literature. However, they differed in terms of the actors studied and the data used. The key findings from these articles regarding the overarching research question are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

Article 1. How can non-elected representatives secure democratic representation?

Article 1 explores how democratic non-electoral representation is understood among non-elected group representatives, their constituents and the decision-making audience in a governance network context. Building on Montanaro (2017, p. 65, 2019, p. 195), non-electoral representation is defined as democratic when the outcome of the representative–constituent relationship benefits the constituents, who can authorise and hold the representatives accountable for their actions. In the context of governance networks, this article defines an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency when the actions, opinions, arguments and claims of the network participant converge with the constituency's perception of how network participants should act, which opinions and arguments to voice and the content of the claims made. Authorisation is applied to the context of governance networks, operationalised as the constituency's indication of approval by signalling their support for, and agreement with, the network participants. Finally, in the same context, accountability is operationalised as (1) information sharing, face-to-face dialogue and two-way communication between network participants and the constituency; (2) the constituency's indication of disapproval by signalling its opposition to and disagreement with the network participants; and (3) the representatives adjusting what is represented (Bovens et al., 2008; Montanaro, 2017).

Overall, this article's findings suggest that members of the three groups have a close to mutual understanding of non-electoral representation concerning the three elements defined as democratic representation, namely an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency, authorisation and accountability. There is divergence concerning authorisation. All actors understand an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency as being well-represented, which is ensured by ongoing representative–constituent interactions. Thus, ongoing interactions may function as a mechanism for securing democratic representation. In addition, multiple sources of authorisation ensure democratic representation for the representatives and the audience, while the constituents occasionally are concerned with authorisation. Finally, even though it is less critical for the non-elected representatives than for the constituents and the audience, deliberative aspects of accountability generally secure democratic representation.

Article 2. The contextuality of interactive representation: Are elections critical to democratic representation?

Article 2 contrasts non-elected representatives with elected representatives to generalise how interactive the representative–constituent relationship is in present-day democracies and how perceptions of democratic representation practices are affected by one being either an elected or a non-elected representative. Based on several theoretical contributions discussing an interactive, shifting, negotiated and creative take on representation (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Montanaro, 2017; Naurin & Reh, 2018; Saward, 2010; Sørensen, 2020; Urbinati, 2011), the operationalisation of interactive representation in this article is threefold. First, I suggest that interactive representation requires that the representatives be accepted by their constituents. Second, interactive representation involves representatives explaining and justifying their actions to their constituents. Third, interactive representation entails representatives having autonomy from their constituents. All three measurements constitute interactive representation, and three hypotheses on elected and non-elected representatives with different perceptions are derived.

Overall, the findings suggest that the representatives, to a moderately high degree, engage with interactive representation practices by explaining and justifying one's actions while maintaining partial autonomy to make political decisions and gain acceptance. When comparing elected and non-elected representatives, the findings show that the nature or form of the representatives' constituency (i.e. their particularity) are more important for interactive representation than the formal status of being elected or non-elected. What matters for the representative's engagement in interactive representation practices is how clearly defined and unified their constituents are.

The article further concludes that discursive authorisation can ensure democratic representation for all representative types, while deliberative aspects of accountability ensure democratic representation for elected and non-elected group representatives.

Article 3. The responsibility of an audience: Assessing the legitimacy of non-elected representatives in governance networks

As constituents do not have equal resources to approve or oppose non-electoral representation, **Article 3** explores how decision-making authorities approach credibility, qualifications and connectedness to legitimise non-elected group representatives. These three arguments that decision-making authorities can use to legitimise non-electoral representation are drawn from the studies of de Wilde (2019) and Chapman and Lowndes (2014). Based on these scholars, I define credibility as the non-elected representatives' justifications of why they represent what they do. Qualifications legitimise non-elected

representatives based on their attributes and skills and are therefore operationalised as signals of a network actor's truthfulness and collaborative character. Finally, connectedness indicates the relationship between representatives and their constituencies. An important part of this relationship is representatives' visibility and responsiveness to feedback and the fact that claims contain clarifications on accountability. Connectedness is operationalised as network actors' perceived interaction with the constituency and how this interaction affects what is represented.

The article demonstrates that the audience legitimises representatives using credibility and qualifications rather than connectedness with the constituency. The decision-making authority believes that non-elected representatives from membership organisations are legitimate when their claims are grounded in specialist expertise and shared experiences with the constituency. By contrast, non-elected representatives from an organisation without members are legitimate when their claims are based on their self-representation of specialist expertise. Furthermore, all non-elected representatives with truthful claims are considered legitimate. Finally, the decision-making authority is divided concerning how the interaction between non-elected representatives from membership organisations and the constituency (i.e. accountability) legitimises the representative. On the one hand, the interaction between the representative and the constituency to construct representative claims is taken for granted. On the other hand, references to internal democratic processes and the inclusion of members in network meetings have a legitimising function. The decision-making audience does not recognise non-elected representatives from organisations without members as interacting with their constituents.

5 Concluding discussion and implications of findings

In this chapter, combining key findings from all three articles, I answer the overarching research question on *how non-electoral representation plays out as an interactive activity in governance networks in present-day democracies and under which conditions non-electoral representation is democratic.* The first section presents a discussion of the first part of this question, while the following two sections approach the second part. Concerning the first part of the question, the findings empirically confirm (along with other studies; see, e.g., Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018) the theoretical idea of representation as an ongoing process. Therefore, this concluding chapter pays attention to the conditions for democratic non-electoral representation, as this is the area in which my empirical findings have the potential to nuance the theoretical discussion. Providing further insights into the literature on democratic representation, the combined findings of this thesis are discussed in light of several of the theoretically debated conditions explained in Section 2.3.2. Finally, I present the policy implications of this thesis, along with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Non-electoral representation as an interactive activity

The overarching question posed in this thesis first asks *how non-electoral representation plays out as an interactive activity in governance networks in present-day democracies*. Answering this part of the research question, my findings indicate that empirically, the activity of representation plays out as an interactive process in which most of what needs representation and what is represented develops through negotiations (or representatives explaining and justifying their actions to their constituents) in response to constantly changing situations.

More specifically, I found that constituents implicitly understand representation to develop as situations, knowledge and ideas change. This group of actors was found to appreciate, as emphasised theoretically (see, e.g., Naurin and Reh, 2018; Sørensen, 2020), the process of negotiating the outcome of representation. For representatives, this thesis shows that having the autonomy to act independently while still explaining and justifying one's actions to gain constituents general acceptance in a moderately high degree describes how representation plays out as an interactive activity in governance networks. Although representatives with clearly defined and unified constituents are more inclined to engage in interactive representation, my findings suggest that non-elected group representatives without a defined constituency change what they represent to ensure that the outcome of representation benefits the constituency. Concerning the decision-making audience, this thesis demonstrates that representation plays out interactively as a process of making, revising and remaking representative claims. What the

representatives say in one network meeting and how they change their standpoint in the next network meeting describes the interactive activity of representation.

5.2 Democratic representation by forming, practising and maintaining an interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship

The second part of the overarching research question asks *under which conditions non-electoral representation is democratic*. Saward (2010) defined democratic representation as evidence of the constituent's acceptance of representative claims. In the literature, non-electoral authorisation and accountability are ways for the constituents to judge (i.e. accept), or at least a means to mobilise the constituents to judge, the representatives. Thus, authorisation and accountability are considered conditions for democratic representation (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Dovi, 2018; Mansbridge, 2003; Montanaro, 2017; Saward, 2009).

Exploring these conditions empirically, I found that even though some constituents' understandings of representation suggest that authorisation implies non-explicit disagreement, most constituents do not experience authorisation as facilitating judgement. On the contrary, as has been described theoretically as discursive authorisation (Montanaro, 2017), all representative types studied recognised the expression of agreement as a form of being judged by constituents. This thesis also shows that non-elected group representatives understand representation in terms of authorisation as being a member or follower and participating in internal democratic processes. This finding supports the literature proposing that mechanisms of organisational authorisation enable constituents' judgements of the representatives (Montanaro, 2017).

Furthermore, I found that the constituents understood representation in terms of accountability as an ongoing dialogue with their representatives to report and discuss network activities. This empirical insight supports the literature suggesting that deliberative (or voice-related) aspects of accountability mobilise constituents to judge representatives (Dovi, 2018; Mansbridge, 2003; Montanaro, 2017, 2019; Saward, 2009). At the same time, the representatives are less unified in their understanding of representation when it comes to the deliberative aspects of accountability. All representatives explain and justify their actions to constituents, but non-elected individual representatives do so to a lower degree. In addition, some non-elected group representatives emphasise information giving rather than two-way communication with constituents. Finally, neither the representatives nor the constituents support the theoretical idea of accountability based on sanctions (Montanaro, 2012, 2017) as enabling constituents' judgements.

Following Saward's (2010) definition of democratic representation, I focus on constituents and the finding that they highlight deliberative aspects of accountability as enabling the judgement of

representatives. Accountability involves deliberation in terms of representatives regularly interacting with their constituents to explain the reasons for their actions and receive feedback and consent from the constituents to grasp what the constituents want to be represented. An ongoing interactive representative–constituent relationship based on two-way communication facilitates deliberative aspects of accountability (Mansbridge, 2009; Montanaro, 2017). Thus, to answer the overarching research question, I suggest that non-electoral representation is democratic under the condition of the representatives forming, practising and maintaining an interactive, deliberative and discussion-based representative–constituent relationship. As suggested by the evidence, such interaction mobilises the constituents to accept representative claims.

The finding that an interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship is a condition for democratic representation supports the theoretical discussion (Castiglione, 2020; Kuyper, 2016; Maia, 2012; Nuske, 2022), showing that systemic aspects act as conditions for democratic representation. However, any representative–constituent interaction regardless of location, form, purpose or dynamic is not a condition for democratic representation. Although this issue is not addressed in my thesis, this condition for democratic representation depends on what happens during deliberation, the institutional design facilitating the deliberation processes and the general quality of deliberation (Kuyper, 2016; Nuske, 2022). Furthermore, I found that representatives with clearly defined and unified constituents were more inclined to engage in deliberative aspects of accountability than those whose constituencies were unclear. Although non-electoral representation entails diversity, plurality and variety as principles of political equality (Saward, 2016), I suggest, in agreement with Näsström (2015), that generating political equality among constituents is essential for an interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship to mimic elections as a condition for democratic representation.

Finally, my finding that an ongoing interactive and deliberative constituent–relationship is a condition for democratic representation opens up the discussion on representative autonomy. Representatives' autonomy means being free to make political decisions in changing contexts. Instead of consulting the constituents before every decision, autonomy allows representatives to convince their constituents that the representatives' decisions align with their interests (Dovi, 2018; Sørensen, 2020; Urbinati, 2006). At the same time, constituents' autonomy means having the opportunity to challenge and reject representative claims and thus negotiate what needs representation. Although autonomy is essential for representatives and their constituents, this concept has been empirically overlooked (Dovi, 2018). This thesis scratches the surface of representative autonomy and shows that elected and non-elected group representatives perceive themselves as less autonomous from their constituents than do non-elected individual representatives. I also found that non-elected individual representatives deliberated less with their constituents than the other two representative types. Therefore, I suggest that possessing less

autonomy might increase the chances of a representative deliberating with their constituents, thus improving democratic representation.

5.3 Democratic representation through audience judgement?

Without principles such as an equal right to vote, not all constituents have the opportunities, resources, access or knowledge to judge non-elected representatives (Castiglione, 2020). Thus, the decision-making audience (i.e. the politicians and civil servants organising the network), being the target of representation, may play a role in judging representatives. Further addressing the part of the overarching research question regarding the *conditions under which non-electoral representation is democratic*, this section discusses the audience's judgement (i.e. acceptance) of representatives as a condition for democratic representation.

I once again return to the literature on non-electoral authorisation and accountability as means for constituents to judge, or at least to mobilise the constituents to judge, their representatives (Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Dovi, 2018; Mansbridge, 2003; Montanaro, 2017; Saward, 2009). Taking the audience rather than constituents into account, I found, based on the audience's understanding of representation, that the audience uses evidence of organisational authorisation with reference to membership basis and discursive authorisation regarding nonexplicit disagreement to judge representatives. This thesis further demonstrates that among the decision-making audience, some perceive representation to involve representatives sharing information about their actions with their constituents to obtain the input of the latter. However, most actors in the audience do not consider such deliberative aspects of accountability (or horizontal connectedness; see Chapman & Lowndes, 2014) when judging representatives. Finally, accountability based on sanctions (see Montanaro, 2017) is generally absent when the audience judges representatives.

Rather than relying on non-electoral mechanisms of authorisation and accountability, I found that when it comes to judging representatives, the audience uses the representatives' qualifications, references to specialist expertise, self-representation and shared experiences with the constituency made in their spoken arguments, stories and assertions. This information, which functions as a justification for why the non-elected actor is a representative, facilitates constituents' judgements (de Wilde, 2019). Thus, in line with de Wilde (2019), my findings suggest that explicit information on justifications contained in a representative claim mobilises audiences to judge representatives. Furthermore, representatives' credibility in the sense of being truthful is a precondition for the audience to use information on justification when judging representatives. This finding resonates with Chapman and Lowndes (2014), who suggested that representatives' authenticity, defined as genuine or honest claims, indicates democratic representation in governance networks. This authenticity ensures that non-electoral representation functions as an opportunity for political inequalities to gain visibility (Saward, 2016).

Overall, these findings imply that when judging representatives, the audience relies on representatives' provisions of truthful justifications as to why they represent their constituents, together with clear, prior and occasional confirmation of the constituents' consent. Thus, what goes on between representatives and constituents in deliberative activity is difficult to observe as an outsider. When it comes to a theory of audience judgements, these findings indicate that audiences rely on tangible and concrete physical or expressed evidence of constituents' acceptance that is publicly visible. To answer the overarching research question, audience judgement (i.e. acceptance) may supplement an interactive and deliberative representative–constituent relationship as the key condition for democratic representation when constituents have unequal resources to accept representation.

5.4 Policy implications

The findings described in this thesis are relevant to how civil servants and politicians design governance networks. Network design is critical for successful networks, with inclusion being a fundamental design issue (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The finding that there are ways for non-elected network participants to function as democratic representatives should help policymakers reduce their concerns regarding inclusion. Broad participation can be achieved indirectly with the help of democratic non-elected representatives. Rather than including the entirety of relevant actors, which often reduces network efficiency, governments can strategically include those who democratically represent different groups of interests. Thus, focusing on including democratic non-elected representatives in networks can strengthen the input side of politics without sacrificing network efficiency.

When designing networks, instead of inclusion, governments can focus on whom network participants represent and whether constituents accept these network participants as representatives (i.e. whether there is democratic representation). In general, the findings of this thesis suggest that civil servants and politicians participating in the network, as observers of representatives' spoken arguments, expressed opinions and actions, have a role in judging the quality of democratic representation.

5.5 Future research

This thesis provides an empirical study of interactive representation from the perspectives of all actors involved in representative claim-making. The thesis also shows that governance networks, by functioning as an arena for democratic non-elected representatives to influence politics, can complement representative democracy. However, several aspects related to these contributions require further research. First, the methodological and thus the analytical challenge of identifying constituents encountered in this thesis and several other studies (see Severs, 2020) suggests that further empirical

studies of constituents would advance the research frontier. Without clear territorial boundaries and with constantly changing what needs representation, it becomes difficult to identify and define constituencies. If constituents differ from those who can exercise authorisation and demand accountability, representation becomes split into two constituencies, and achieving democratic representation becomes difficult (Montanaro, 2017). Although this issue was not thoroughly investigated in my thesis, some of the results I found concerning representatives' understanding of representation in terms of authorisation and accountability suggest that dual constituencies have an empirical basis. However, the consequences of this fact for the discussion on democratic representation are unknown.

Second, representation as an ongoing process involves representatives continuously interacting, negotiating and explaining their actions to constituents (Saward, 2010). However, this thesis analysed representation as an interactive activity at a specific time in one context, namely that of governance networks. Future studies could explore the representative–constituent relationship over an extended period and in other contexts to further advance the research frontier. Such insights would improve our empirical knowledge and contribute to the theoretical discussion on non-electoral representation.

Finally, some non-elected representatives, as well as their constituents, may be particularly aware of their responsibilities as representatives. They might even have internal democratic procedures allowing their constituents to judge them as representatives. Thus, the case study findings discussed in this thesis would benefit from additional empirical material on non-elected individual representatives and their constituents. A fruitful approach to advance the research on interactive, shifting and negotiated representation would be to explore whether the identified conditions for democratic representation among non-elected group representatives also apply when individual citizens act as non-elected representatives. Individual citizens are often assigned the role of representatives through participation in networks such as sub-municipal bodies or deliberative mini-publics. This is another type of network than those studied in this thesis, and additional empirical material on these representatives would contribute further insights into the literature on governance networks and how such networks can complement representative democracy.

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PART TWO

I

Article 1: How can non-elected representatives secure democratic representation?

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article

How can non-elected representatives secure democratic representation?

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Research on the democratic legitimacy of non-elected actors influencing policy while acting as representatives is often lacking in governance literature, despite being increasingly relevant worldwide. Recent theories of representation argue that there are non-electoral mechanisms to appoint such non-elected representatives and hold them responsible for their actions. Consequently, democratic non-electoral representation can be achieved. Through empirical analysis, this article explores democratic non-electoral representation in governance networks by comparing how non-elected representatives, their constituents and the decision-making audience understand the outcome of representation to benefit the constituency, authorisation and accountability. The research findings conclude that all three groups mostly share the understanding of democratic non-electoral representation as ongoing interactions between representatives and constituents, multiple (if any) organisational and discursive sources of authorisation and deliberative aspects of accountability. All of these are non-electoral mechanisms that secure democratic representation. These findings make an important contribution to the literature on non-electoral representation in policymaking.

Key words non-electoral representation • representative democracy • democratic representation • authorisation • accountability • governance networks

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Introduction

All actors who participate in governance networks make representative claims on behalf of a wide range of affected groups, interests, values or causes (Hendriks, 2008; 2009; Saward, 2010; Torfing et al, 2009; Chapman and Lowndes, 2014). Their expertise and shared experiences with those affected justify these non-elected actors as representatives (van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018). When the network actors claim to represent the affected people, they are indirectly allowed to influence decision

making, provide input that qualifies public policy and thus take ownership of decisions made (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018).

Governance networks are 'self-regulating horizontal articulations of interdependent, but operationally autonomous, actors from the public and/or private sectors' (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018: 304). Networks engage a broad range of actors in the policy process, and the relevant public and private actors included who are not politicians are viewed as non-elected representatives (Gilchrist, 2006; Hendriks, 2008; Ayres, 2020). Non-elected representatives comprise a diverse group of actors who supplement the elected representatives in governance networks, ensuring broader representation of interests in politics and eventually, better policy outcomes (Chapman and Lowndes, 2014; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018; Stoker, 2019). As such, non-elected network actors as representatives can overcome networks' struggles with representative democracy (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Jeffares and Skelcher, 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018).

Saward's (2010; 2020) theory on representative claims, emphasising representation as the outcome of a dynamic representative–constituency relationship that may not involve electoral politics, enables non-electoral representation. Hence, democratic non-elected representatives cannot rely on being appointed and held responsible for their actions through elections (Knappe, 2017). Recent representation theories suggest that non-elected representatives depend on organisational and discursive mechanisms to secure democratic representation (Montanaro, 2017; 2019; de Wilde, 2019). Thus, it is possible to achieve democratic non-electoral representation in governance networks. However, without formal institutional processes, the availability of these non-electoral mechanisms' for constituents may differ. It is a risk that non-elected representatives may act as representatives without adhering to democratic norms. To understand the democratic potential of non-electoral representation, this article explores *how democratic non-electoral representation is understood in the context of governance networks*.

Few studies have empirically investigated democratic non-electoral representation in governance networks. The mechanisms to ensure democratic non-electoral representation have so far been studied in social movements, social and healthcare policy, pressure politics and among civil society actors (Schlozman et al, 2015; Knappe, 2017; van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018; Almeida, 2019; de Wilde, 2019). An exception is Chapman and Lowndes's (2014) study, which investigates democratic non-electoral representation in governance networks. Based on representatives' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, the authors emphasise that representatives' authenticity, rather than formal means of authorisation and accountability, contributes to democratic non-electoral representation (Chapman and Lowndes, 2014: 287). In accordance with this cited study, the current research empirically investigates such non-electoral mechanisms that secure democratic representation in order to gain an understanding of the democratic potential of non-electoral representation. Adding to Chapman and Lowndes's (2014) research, this study explores how such mechanisms are understood by not only the representatives but also their constituents and the decision-making audience witnessing the representation. Studying these three groups of actors, each engaged in a representative claim, makes it possible to further develop the theory on non-electoral mechanisms in democratic representation. To do so, this study develops an empirical operationalisation of democratic non-electoral representation within the framework of representative claims and applies the operationalisation to governance networks.

To investigate the representatives', the constituency's and the audience's understanding of non-electoral representation, this research takes the form of an explorative study. Based on three networks organised around business and urban development, which touch on issues concerning commercial and social activities (for example, climate and environment, transportation, tourism, liveability and retail commerce) in the centre of the City of Oslo, this study examines democratic non-electoral representation among organised actors. The three networks selected to cover the diversity of organised actors include different types of economic interest groups, private businesses and public entities. This study's specific interest lies in representative claims made by organised actors, because they have the power to influence policymaking. This resourceful sub-elite is often accused of over-representing advantaged sub-groups, resulting in undemocratic representation (Schlozman et al, 2015; Montanaro, 2017; 2019). Moreover, in business and urban development, a lot is at stake economically for those affected, and there is a danger of conflict among constituents concerning what needs representation. Therefore, this policy area is particularly relevant to studying democratic representation because there may be advantaged sub-groups within the constituency that have the power, resources and will to shift representation to primarily benefit themselves. When investigating organised non-elected representatives, this article also addresses the literature on interest groups (Berry, 1984; 2016; Skocpol, 1999; Schlozman et al, 2015). Adding to this literature, this study investigates organised interests beyond representation by groups and broadens the concept of interest group representation past the group's members, followers or subscribers to encompass all those affected.

The article is structured as follows: the next section outlines the concept of democratic non-electoral representation using the theory of representative claims and applies it to governance networks. The methods used to answer the research question of how democratic non-electoral representation is understood in governance networks are then described. The subsequent sections present the perspectives of the non-elected representatives, the constituency and the audience and discuss the theoretical implications of the results. Finally, the article concludes that all three groups have a relatively equal understanding of democratic non-electoral representation as ongoing interactions between the representative and the constituency, multiple (if any) organisational and discursive sources of authorisation, as well as deliberative (rather than sanctioning) aspects of accountability. All of these can be considered non-electoral mechanisms that secure democratic representation.

Democratic non-electoral representation

Pitkin's (1967: 116) account of representation as 'the act of standing for someone's interests' assumes that those represented have a clear and relatively fixed set of interests. In his critique, Saward (2010) argues that this idea of representation overlooks the dynamic aspect of representation. In Saward's theory, representation is reconceptualised as an activity of making claims to represent others. The process of accepting and rejecting representative claims makes representation an interactive process between the representative and the constituency of constructing what is represented (Saward, 2010; 2020; Sørensen, 2020). This view of representation makes room for non-elected actors to make others present in public (Knappe, 2017; Montanaro, 2017; Dovi, 2018; van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018). Following Saward's (2010: 36) definition of

representative claim making, this article studies the non-elected representative (claim maker) who presents oneself and one's organisation (subject) as the representative of a constituency (object) to a target observing the claim (audience). The next sections define who the claim maker, the subject, the object and the audience are in governance networks.

Non-elected representatives (claim makers) are those who claim to represent others, such as experts, employers' organisations, activists, celebrities or non-governmental organisations (Maia, 2012; Montanaro, 2019). In local politics, non-elected representatives claim to represent groups of citizens based on their experiences as members of or proximity to these groups (van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018). This study focuses on organised non-elected representatives. In accordance with the literature on interest groups (see, for example, Gormley, 1983; Berry, 1984; 2016; Skocpol, 1999), this article distinguishes between organisations with and without members as organised non-elected representatives. Membership organisations are economic interest groups that represent their members, subscribers or supporters. Organisations without members are politically active private businesses, foundations and public entities, such as universities or hospitals, that aggregate the interests of individuals affected (Redford, 1969; Berkhout, 2013; Schlozman et al, 2015; Montanaro, 2017). Applying the theory of representative claims to the representation by organisations with and without members introduces the concept of dynamic representation to the interest group literature (Schlozman et al, 2015). In a governance network, the non-elected representative is the organisation, either with or without members, participating in the network. Therefore, this article does not distinguish between the individual network participant and the organisation (the subject).

The constituency (object) comprises the group whose interests are represented (Montanaro, 2012; 2017; 2019). When the non-elected representative claims that some entities or individuals are affected or potentially affected, they form a constituency (Mulieri, 2013; Knappe, 2017; Guasti and Geissel, 2019). In the investigated networks, this article identifies the constituency as comprising employers and employees who are members of interest groups, individuals employed in the industry, industry companions, clients, and citizens in the urban area. Because representation involves affected interests, it is not necessarily tied to membership, supporters or subscribers. The constituents of a labour union may be employees who are members of the organisation, non-unionised employees or other labour union members (Montanaro, 2012; 2017). Hence, for organised non-elected representatives, the constituency is 'the membership basis of participating groups or organisations and the directly affected people' (Torfing et al, 2009: 288).

The audience is the recipient of a representative claim. The audience members are the observers of the claim makers who assign the function of a representative to these actors (Saward, 2010; Montanaro, 2017). Based on Guasti and Geissel's (2019) article, the present article defines the audience as the decision-making authority. In governance networks, the decision-making authority rests with the civil servants and politicians initiating and managing the networks, selecting participants and participating in the networks.

An outcome of the representative–constituent relationship that benefits the constituency and constituents, which can authorise and hold the representative accountable, is the set of mechanisms securing democratic non-electoral representation (Montanaro, 2017: 65; 2019: 195). Achieving an *outcome of the*

non-electoral representative–constituent relationship that benefits the constituency can prove difficult because what is beneficial may develop within the representative–constituent relationship (Knappe, 2017). However, Montanaro (2017: 65–66) argues that as long as the outcome of representation is equal, representation benefits the constituency. Equal representation occurs when the outcome of representation over time benefits all sub-groups within the constituency and can be measured empirically as the convergence between the constituents' perception of how a representative should act and the representative's actions (Wolkenstein and Wratil, 2020: 7). On this basis, this article operationalises an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency as a convergence among the actions, opinions, arguments and claims of the network participant and the constituency's perception of how the network participant should act, which opinions and arguments to voice and the content of the claims made.

For non-electoral together with electoral representation, authorisation and accountability ensure democratic representation. However, without elections, the non-electoral mechanisms of authorisation and accountability are organisational and discursive (Montanaro, 2012; 2017). *Non-electoral authorisation* means the constituents' approval of the non-elected representative (van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018). Organisational approval involves constituents supporting representatives by joining organisations, contributing financially and voting within the organisation. The constituency can discursively approve the representative through public agreement, for example, by supporting protests and sharing ideas on social media that strengthen the representative's public reputation (Montanaro, 2012; 2017; 2019). Applied to the context of governance networks, authorisation is operationalised as the constituency's indication of approval by signalling their support for and agreement with the network participants.

Similar to electoral accountability, *non-electoral accountability* relies on non-elected representatives' obligations to explain and justify their actions to the constituency, which can then pass judgement and, if necessary, sanction non-elected representatives, demanding that they adjust what is represented according to the constituency's expectations (Bovens et al, 2008: 227). The non-elected representatives explain and justify their actions by responding to questions and sharing information about their actions, practising face-to-face dialogue and – ideally – engaging in two-way communication with the constituents. Meetings, public debate or social media may encourage the deliberative aspect of accountability (van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018; Montanaro, 2019). If the constituency, given sufficient information, believes that the non-elected representatives do not deliver results as promised, it can sanction them by expressing disapproval. Organisational disapproval includes constituents' opposition to representatives by withdrawing their membership, withholding money or refusing to vote within the organisation. Discursive disapproval relies on constituents expressing public disagreement, which undermines the involved representative's reputation (Montanaro, 2012; 2017; 2019). For constituents, the purpose of expressing disapproval is to encourage representatives to do better and adjust what is represented accordingly (Montanaro, 2019). In this study, accountability is operationalised as i) information sharing, face-to-face dialogue and two-way communication between network participants and the constituency about the participants' actions in the network, ii) the constituency's indication of disapproval by signalling its opposition to and disagreement with the network participants and iii) the representatives' adjusting what is represented.

In summary, by describing the non-elected representatives', the constituency's and the audience's understanding of representation with reference to an outcome of the representative–constituent relationship that benefits the constituency, authorisation and accountability, this article explores democratic non-electoral representation in governance networks.

Methods

This study explores democratic non-electoral representation by organised actors in business and urban development networks in Oslo, the capital of Norway. The participants were selected from three networks to account for the diversity of organised non-elected representatives (Berkhout, 2013; Schlozman et al, 2015; Castiglione and Warren, 2019). One network includes mainly organisations without members, the second comprises membership organisations, and the third combines organisations with and without members. The three business and urban development networks operate in the same context, that is, they deal with the conditions for how industry, tourists and citizens, use urban areas and are governed by the same departments and municipal agencies in Oslo. All three networks have an advisory function, and participation provides an opportunity to influence policy. Although Oslo differs in complexity from other Norwegian municipalities, the private actors included typically participate in most Norwegian business and urban development networks. Interactions between these public and private actors are also relatively common in urban politics in most medium-sized European cities (Pierre, 2016).

The analysis is based on qualitative data collected from 40 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 43 respondents, consisting of key network participants, the interests they claim to represent and the civil servants and politicians participating in the three networks. All respondents were recruited voluntarily, resulting in 21 unanswered invitations and four refusals, with the latter based on insufficient knowledge about the topic. Table 1 describes the respondents and the distribution of the interviews.

The 20 non-elected representatives in this study were network participants with management positions in organisations with and without members. Half came from organisations that have no members, that is, private organisations and public entities such as businesses, universities, hospitals and non-profit foundations. The remaining ten respondents were from membership organisations encompassing economic interest groups, that is, employers' organisations, trade unions, chambers of commerce,

Table 1: The groups of respondents

	Non-elected representatives	Constituency	Audience
Groups of actors	Interest groups, private businesses, public entities	Members, employees, customers, clients, partners, competitors, investors, students, citizens, visitors	Civil servants, politicians
Position	CEO, managers	Owner, manager, senior employee, senior member	Adviser, senior adviser, director
Number interviewed	20	13	18

Note: Some of the interviewed respondents considered themselves both non-elected representatives and part of the constituency.

real estate associations and city-centre retail, business and residents' associations. Interviewing respondents from the constituency proved to be challenging because the respondents constituting the constituency may change as what is represented and the networks' issues develops. Consequently, the constituency that comprises those represented is somewhat less well represented in this study's sample. The interviewed constituents were members of interest groups and employees, customers or competitors of private businesses or public entities. Approximately two-thirds of the interviewed respondents as part of the constituency knew about the networks. These were identified through interviews with the network participants. This selection technique might result in a biased sample of constituency respondents, a sub-group close to the representatives that might have an overly positive understanding of representation. To have a more unbiased selection of respondents, some interviewed constituents were identified by asking the audience and searching public registers of members, followers, customers and competitors. The audience consisted of civil servants and politicians initiating and organising the networks and participating in them. Civil servants are over-represented among the respondents; however, civil servants rather than politicians are those whose daily responsibilities include managing the networks. This article omits the actual names of the networks and refers to the respondents by their occupations when using quotes to ensure confidentiality.

The data were collected between December 2019 and November 2020 and managed remotely with restricted access. The interviews were primarily conducted individually, both in person in workplaces and online during office hours. Three interviews were conducted in pairs. All respondents were given an information sheet and asked to provide written informed consent. The semi-structured interviews provided the author with the flexibility to adjust the questions in the course of the interview while capturing predefined theoretical concepts. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. With one exception, all interviews were recorded electronically and fully transcribed. To gain insights into the representatives', the constituents' and the decision-making audience's understanding of democratic non-electoral representation, the interview topic was the relationship between the representative and those represented. The interview questions dealt with the representative role, constructing what was represented, the reasons for acting and accepting a representative, practised dialogue and interaction, openness to input, access to information, and opportunities to take responsibility and be held accountable. In general, interviews offered valuable insights into the reasons behind the respondents' perspectives. Therefore, the interview questions were formulated using neutral terms to encourage individual reflections. However, as pointed out by Beamer (2002), the elite respondents interviewed in this type of study might have felt the need to respond in a socially desirable way when asked questions about democracy and representation. To control for this self-report bias, the author asked broad questions and approached the concept of democratic non-electoral representation from different angles.

Due to the theoretically driven research question, a deductive approach was applied when coding the interview data in NVivo. The codes were the theoretical concepts of an outcome of the representative–constituent relationship that would benefit the constituency, authorisation and accountability. These codes were operationalised in the coding protocol according to the definitions presented in the previous section. Therefore, data excerpts about 'spoken arguments, opinions and claims', the 'representative's actions' and 'expressed needs, interests and wants' were assigned to the

code an *outcome of representation that benefits the constituency*. Extracts about 'supporting actions, selection and public agreement' were allocated to the code *authorisation*. 'Information sharing, two-way communication and face-to-face dialogue' and 'opposing actions, public disagreement and adjustments in what is represented' fit the code *accountability*.

How non-elected representatives in governance networks represent their constituents

The data show that the participants in the investigated networks made representative claims. The network participants affiliated with membership organisations claimed to represent their members. The network participants from organisations with no members claimed to represent their customers, partners, stakeholders, employees, competitors and even the entire industry based on their specialised expertise. These findings resonate with Saward's (2010; 2020) idea that non-elected actors function as representatives, demonstrating that representation does not have to be electoral.

Furthermore, the network participants, the constituents and the audience did not view the individual network participants as representatives. Instead, the organisation with which the individual participant is affiliated was recognised as a non-elected representative. This recognition applies, regardless of whether the organisations in the network had or did not have members. Thus, what the individual participant communicated was considered the view of the organisation. The following subsections therefore present an analysis of the organisations, both those with and without members, that are included in the network as non-elected representatives.

Non-elected representatives' understanding of how they represent their constituencies

Non-elected representatives (that is, the organisations participating in the network) understood the act of expressing the needs, wants and potential struggles of their members, customers, clients, employees, owners, industry and students affected by network activities as an (expected) *outcome of representation that benefits the constituency*. The respondents explained that they act on behalf of their constituents because they 'struggle with the same issues', 'are affected', 'know the members, sector or industry', 'have expertise' and 'anticipate future developments'. Non-elected representatives seemed to share an identity with those they claimed to represent – their constituency. The majority of the respondents shared this understanding of an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency.

In detail, membership organisations participating in the network argued that the mandate they receive from their members enables an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency. A manager of an interest group confidently explains it this way: 'Because we are a membership organisation, [we are justified as representatives]. Our members gather around our political objectives, which they have decided through participation in the board of directors' (Interview, 17.01.2020). The 'political objective' is the mandate received by the organisations from their members. Relying on a fixed mandate indicates the membership organisations' belief that they represent, in Pitkin's (1967) terms, relatively static interests. Organisations without members have no mandate to rely on. Such organisations therefore acknowledge that they must

change what they represent to ensure that the outcome of representation benefits the constituency, thus embracing what is identified as a dynamic representative relationship (Saward, 2010; de Wilde, 2019). A manager of a private business who claimed to represent its employees and the greening of the industry expresses the view that 'there is a big gap internally in the organisation; we have those under 40 with a great desire to think [environmentally], and there are those in their 50s and older who are sceptical […] and prefer how it has been [over] the last years' (Interview, 21.01.2020). Non-membership organisations acting as non-elected representatives are more concerned about unequally representing sub-groups than organisations with a membership basis that function as representatives. However, only a few organisations without members expressed this worry.

The organisations participating in the network initially understood *authorisation* as the audience's approval – inclusion to participate in the network. On closer examination, audience approval was granted in addition to constituency approval. A manager of an interest group emphasises this dual authorisation by saying, 'Because we have existed for so many years, we have a position on urban development in the municipality, but formally speaking, we are a membership organisation' (Interview, 17.01.2020). In their eyes, members joining their organisation signal constituents' support. The financial contribution that membership often requires is interpreted as what Montanaro (2017; 2019) calls an organisational source of approval. All the membership organisations in the network shared the perspective of being supported through membership. Organisations without members, which could not rely on membership signalling support, depend on followership for constituency approval. A respondent in a private business management position explained that 'all persons who own their vehicles are considered members here' (Interview, 21.01.2020). Thus, followers, such as individuals employed, customers signing contracts, students enrolled and partners owning shares, have the same support function as membership. Eight out of ten organisations without members confirmed this view. Altogether, non-elected representatives in governance networks rely on dual authorisation. The need for double authorisation – membership or followership and being selected as a network participant – implies the lack of an institutionalised process of authorisation that ensures all constituents' equal opportunities to authorise representatives.

The organisations participating in the network understand *accountability* as sharing information with the constituency and welcoming questions to ensure the visibility of their actions in the network. A respondent holding a management position in an interest group opined that 'it is up to us to inform and get input [from our members], to know that we have support for our suggestions [in the network]. [Accountability] is more about ensuring that the members are backing us rather than being held responsible for our actions' (Interview, 11.03.20). Information about the network is shared through face-to-face dialogue in meetings or telephone calls and social media channels, along with newsletters, short videos and membership and employee surveys. Thus, organisations with and without members rely on both one-way and two-way internal communication channels for accountability. Among these arrangements, one-way communication was most often mentioned. Four respondents from non-membership organisations mentioned presentations at external seminars or conferences, press releases and distribution of thematic reports as opportunities for public information sharing. This is because such organisations consider clients or competitors who lack access to internal information to be

their constituents. Non-elected representatives' accountability generally relies on providing constituents with information about the network, communicated through a combination of dialogue and one-way communication, which is primarily organised internally.

Almost all respondents considered these arrangements (for sharing information and asking questions) as opportunities for constituents to signal their opposition. One-third of the respondents even mentioned that they consequently adjusted what they represented. However, in the course of the interviews, it has become evident that almost all respondents believed that it was sufficient to provide information about their actions to sub-groups within the constituency. A CEO of a private business explained, 'I do not convey much [about the network] to our partners and shareholders. I inform the board of directors in the organisation and the management about updates from the network' (Interview, 24.02.2020). General information about the network is presented indirectly, for example, via the management team of the organisation's board of directors, while detailed information is primarily given to constituents, whose workday is significantly affected by network outcomes. This uneven provision of information may result in adjusting what is represented towards sub-groups within the constituency. When differentiating what and how much should be reported, the non-elected representatives defined their constituency more narrowly than when asked who they claim to represent.

The constituency's understanding of how they are represented

For the interviewees representing the constituency (that is, the represented), an *outcome of representation that benefits themselves* means that the network participants act in such a way that their constituents feel understood, heard, acknowledged, seen or helped. The respondents representing the constituencies of non-membership organisations said that they are understood, heard or seen when the network participants share their views on broader causes (for example, climate and environmental protection) rather than personal needs (for example, internal work conditions). Those representing the constituencies of membership organisations are more inward thinking in what being understood, heard or seen entails. For example, a CEO of a transport business argued, 'We are members of an employer's organisation, who [in a difficult time] was there for us and our industry interests. Now, we sometimes experience it acting as an expert group rather than standing for us particularly' (Interview, 14.10.20). The constituents of membership organisations acknowledged that the outcome of representation does not constantly benefit them. This acceptance of representative outcomes that do not always benefit the constituency may imply the constituents' adhering to Pitkin's (1967) static idea of representation. Upon closer examination of what initially seemed like a relatively fixed perception, an underlying understanding of representation was revealed as something that develops as the situation, knowledge and ideas change. A respondent with a management position in a private business said, 'I think [that the membership organisation covers our interests], but it is also up to us to use them. We, as "the new kids on the block" in retail, together with a well-established actor, have paved the way for the membership organisation to provide us with good support' (Interview, 11.11.2020). The constituency acknowledged the possibility of negotiating the outcome of representation, recognising representation as an interactive process constructing what is represented (Sørensen, 2020). This

idea of negotiation was a common perception among almost all the interviewees representing the constituency.

The constituency understands *authorisation* as not explicitly disapproving of network participants' representative claims. The majority of the respondents from the constituency take it for granted that non-explicit disagreement with their representatives indicates discursive approval. Additionally, three interviewees forming the constituency of membership organisations highlighted the general importance of being a member of such organisations and the organisations' important role in policymaking. Signalling support for membership organisations by showing allegiance is a source of discursive approval, while joining organisations is a form of organisational approval (Montanaro, 2019).

The representatives forming the constituency understand *accountability* as entailing an ongoing dialogue with the representatives, where they, as constituents, receive reports on and discuss matters considered in the network, especially those that have an impact on their everyday life. The respondents understood accountability as providing reports on general network activities, rather than the network participants' actions. A senior business employer who was a member of an interest group explains accountability this way: 'It [the membership organisation] reports what it has [from the network]. Sometimes, one requires specialised expertise to explain the right thing to do; then someone from the group [a member] joins network meetings' (Interview, 22.01.2020). The constituents of membership organisations rely on two-way communication channels, which (in addition to being included in network meetings) involve regular meetings, including the general assembly or working groups and individual contacts when talking to the representatives. The constituents also receive reports on network activities through official websites, social media and newsletters; however, these arrangements do not secure two-way communication. All respondents representing the constituency of membership organisations mentioned at least one of these alternatives.

Among customers, partners, businesses and clients comprising the constituency of non-membership organisations, individual contacts and meetings that allow two-way communication are essential for reporting information. For example, a private business manager who claimed that the company's customers represent it said, 'Our customers […], for example, within the circular economy, may meet with us to discuss their ideas [for us to collaborate], and afterwards, they present this [what we agreed] to others in the industry' (Interview, 24.01.2020). Face-to-face dialogue and direct communication are a natural part of these constituents' workdays and thus the representative–constituent relationship. In contrast, individual employees who also form the constituency of non-membership organisations expressed their reliance on indirectly communicating with the organisation via the safety representative in the workplace or the board of directors in the organisation. Two out of seven respondents representing the constituency of a membership organisation expressed this view.

Altogether, the interviewed constituents of the organisations participating in the network were split in understanding accountability as one-way, two-way, directly or indirectly communicating with the non-elected representatives. A plausible explanation for this divide is that resourceful constituents are provided with greater opportunities for accountability. Not being accountable to resourceful constituents may yield more significant negative consequences for non-elected representatives than not being accountable to most of the other constituents, for example, economically,

by losing a client or a partner. This result implies the constituents' unequal capacity to demand accountability.

The interviews showed that disapproval of representatives and adjustment in what is represented are rarely included in constituents' understanding of accountability. Thus, the general understanding of accountability resonates with the deliberative aspect of accountability, but disregards accountability based on sanctions (see Montanaro, 2017; 2019). Only one of 13 respondents, a CEO of a business, touched on signalling disapproval and stated, 'I have never been in a situation where the membership organisation has expressed something we strongly disapprove of […], but if it came to it, I would say so and explain what is important for us' (Interview, 24.02.2020). This public expression of disagreement with the non-elected representative is a discursive source of disapproval.

The audience's understanding of the occurring representation

The audience (that is, the decision-making authority, consisting of the politicians and civil servants initiating and organising the network) understood an *outcome of representation that benefits the constituency* as network participants making the voices of those directly affected by network activities known to the decision-making authority. The audience acknowledged network participants as representatives because they share similar 'experiences and values', 'knowledge', 'specialised expertise' and 'insights' of those affected. A senior adviser in a municipal agency commented that organised non-elected representatives 'are those of importance with formal influence and expertise [on issues relevant for the network] or those working with transport' (Interview, 28.01.2020). Membership organisations, which several respondents (who composed the audience) referred to as lobbyists, have 'formal influence', most respondents expected while non-membership organisations to have 'expertise' (for example, on 'climate and environment') to make the voices of those affected by network activities known.

For membership organisations participating in the network, the audience understood *authorisation* as having and keeping members. A senior advisor in a municipal agency explained, 'They [membership organisations] promote the industry's serious actors, who are also their members. The deceptive actors are not members; they won't pay the membership fee' (Interview, 02.04.2020). Therefore, a common perception among almost all respondents was that constituents signal their support of membership organisations using organisational approval. The majority of the respondents in the audience implicitly understood approval of non-membership organisations as constituents' non-explicit disagreement with these organisations, which often claim a leading role (for example, as prominent actors in the greening of industry) in promoting innovative business models or possessing economic resources. Their public reputation, maintained through public debate, is valuable to organisations with such a central position. Therefore, the audience expected the represented constituents to know about these organisations and express public agreement (for example, by reposting ideas presented on social media). Thus, the audience emphasised what Montanaro (2017; 2019) labels constituents' organisational and discursive approval of non-elected representatives.

The audience understood *accountability* as non-elected representatives' sharing of information about their actions in the network with the constituency to obtain their

input. Accountability is essentially deliberation to explain and justify one's actions (Bovens et al, 2008; Montanaro, 2019). A director of a municipal agency explained:

> As far as I know, they have several membership meetings, and of topics, there is the latest news from [the network], and what to bring to us [the network] from the members next time. I'm sure that they [representatives] are good at anchoring the network, sharing insights and getting input from the members. (Interview, 11.02.2020)

In addition to these face-to-face dialogues, the audience mentioned that the organisations participating in the network also inform their constituency about their actions through one-way communication channels, such as social media, traditional media, newsletters, the organisation's board of directors and meeting minutes. All respondents in the audience believed that both organisations with and without members inform their constituencies. Only two respondents suspected that the network participants might exaggerate their achievements or not inform their constituency about every action. In the course of the conversation on accountability, several respondents became hesitant in their answers. The organisations in the network were included as non-elected representatives, but it has become evident that without verifying existing practices, the audience assumes that non-elected representatives practise accountability.

Half of these respondents believed that these arrangements have resulted in the organisations' (that is, the network participants') adjustment of what they represent. Thus, the arrangements seem to function as organisational sources of disapproval, where the constituency opposes the representatives and pressures them to revise their claims. However, there were disagreements concerning this perspective. Seven respondents were unable to answer the question about adjustments in what is represented, while two others suspected that adjustments in what is represented occur because of acquaintance with others in the network, societal trends and increased knowledge.

Discussion

In summary, the non-elected representatives, the constituents and the audience mostly had a shared understanding of non-electoral representation with respect to an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency, authorisation and accountability. This finding reveals that without elections, non-electoral mechanisms can secure democratic representation in governance networks. Table 2 illustrates how all three groups understand these non-electoral mechanisms.

Although the representatives, the constituency and the audience formulate it differently, their understanding of non-electoral representation towards achieving *an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency* converges. The constituents benefit if they are heard, understood or seen by the representative. The representatives and the audience equally believe that the constituents benefit when the representatives listen to and express the constituents' needs and desires. Thus, the representatives, the constituency and the audience understand the constituents as well-represented. This understanding of an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency requires ongoing interactions between the representative and the constituency

Table 2: Understanding of democratic non-electoral representation.

	Non-elected representatives	Constituency	Audience
An outcome of representation that benefits the constituency	Expressing the needs, desires and potential struggles of the constituency	Feeling understood, heard, acknowledged or seen by the representative	Representatives making the voices of the constituency known to the audience
Authorisation	Membership or followership and inclusion in networks by the audience	Membership and non-explicit disagreement	Membership and non-explicit disagreement
Accountability	Sharing information about their actions with the constituency and welcoming (opposing) questions. What is represented is occasionally adjusted	Ongoing dialogue with the representative to report and discuss network activities	Representatives sharing information about their actions with the constituency to obtain its input What is represented is occasionally adjusted

to continuously grasp what the constituents need to be heard and avoid unequal representation. Contributing to the field, the dynamic (in contrast to a static) representative–constituent relationship may theoretically be considered a mechanism that secures democratic non-electoral representation. However, capturing representation as a dynamic relationship proves empirically tricky, though not impossible. The respondents, especially membership organisations as non-elected representatives and their constituents, initially understood representation, following Pitkin's (1967) definition, as standing for someone's fixed interests. Nonetheless, most respondents' subjective stories, justifications and intentions about representation suggest the existence of a dynamic representative relationship. These findings indicate that democratic theorists' (see, for example, Saward, 2010; 2020; Sørensen, 2020) notion of representation as a process of interaction between the representative and the constituency is a fruitful point of departure for future studies on representation.

In their understanding of representation with respect to *authorisation*, the representatives, the audience and some constituents emphasise approval through membership or followership. Theoretically, this shows that organisational authorisation, suggesting that constituents use financial contributions, membership and internal democratic processes to authorise non-elected representatives, can secure democratic non-electoral representation. Furthermore, the non-elected representatives', the constituency's and the audience's understanding of authorisation indicates that non-electoral representatives depend on more than one authorisation source. The constituency and the audience emphasise discursive (not necessarily public) authorisation by the constituents, while the representatives rely on discursive authorisation by the audience. Advancing Montanaro's (2017) theoretical discussion on non-electoral authorisation, this finding adds that in order to compensate for the absence of formal authorising institutions, multiple authorisations are essential to secure democratic non-electoral representation. However, the findings also indicate that most respondents in the constituency were not particularly concerned about authorising a non-elected representative. Constituents' indifferent attitude towards authorisation may altogether theoretically question the importance of authorisation for democratic non-electoral representation.

Finally, the non-elected representatives', the constituency's and the audience's understanding of non-electoral representation with reference to *accountability* slightly

differs from what is emphasised theoretically. Although all three groups stress the importance of information sharing as a deliberative element of accountability, in their understanding, the respondents from the representatives were less concerned about interacting with the constituency than most respondents from the constituency and the audience. It is possible to ask questions, but the organisations participating in the network do not understand responding to constituents as essential for accountability. Nuancing existing theory, the findings generally show that sanctions may not form a meaningful part of non-electoral accountability. Sanctioning is rarely included in how the constituents (and some respondents among the representatives and the audience) understand accountability. This aspect undermines what Montanaro (2019) theoretically introduces as discursive and organisational accountability. If anything, the deliberative element of accountability offers an opportunity for the constituency to pass judgement and encourage the representatives to adjust what is represented. What Montanaro (2017; 2019) calls deliberative accountability might function as an opportunity to sanction the representative. Theoretically, non-electoral accountability, which ensures democratic representation, involves representatives explaining and justifying their actions to the constituency that (rather than sanctioning) may express its disapproval of the representatives using this deliberative element of accountability.

Conclusion

This study has explored how representatives, the constituency and the audience understand non-electoral representation regarding an outcome of representation that benefits the constituency, authorisation and accountability in business and urban development networks. Although using different wording and with various degrees of emphasis, these three actor groups converge in the understanding of these non-electoral mechanisms that secure democratic representation. The representatives understand democratic non-electoral representation as expressing the needs of those affected by network activities. Membership, followership and inclusion in the network authorise the representatives, and information sharing and welcoming questions guarantee accountability. For the constituency, democratic non-electoral representation entails feeling understood by a representative – that it may not worry about disagreeing with – who engages in an ongoing dialogue. Finally, the audience understands democratic non-electoral representation as the involvement of a representative who makes the voices of those affected by network activities known. The representative is authorised via membership and the absence of public disagreement and ensures accountability through sharing information and collecting constituents' input.

Organisational and discursive authorisation and accountability have theoretically been considered non-electoral mechanisms to ensure democratic representation (Montanaro, 2017; 2019; Knappe, 2017; de Wilde, 2019). However, this study has shown that a well-represented constituency, ensured through ongoing interactions between the representative and the constituency, may also function as a mechanism to secure democratic non-electoral representation. Suppose that this relationship does not evolve with the interactive process that characterises being well-represented. In this case, multiple organisational and discursive sources (if any) of constituency and audience authorisation, as well as deliberative aspects of accountability, ensure democratic representation. Contrary to what Montanaro (2019) suggests, accountability based on sanctions is not considered essential to secure democratic representation.

Organisations selected to participate in a governance network may have reflected on the responsibilities of acting as representatives. Moreover, organised actors (for example, economic interest groups, private businesses or public entities) often have internal procedures to ensure democratic representation, influencing how democratic non-elected representation is understood. Thus, the conclusions would benefit from extending the empirical material to other non-elected actors. Investigating the role of individuals (that is, celebrities or activists rather than organised non-elected representatives) might lead to an increased understanding of democratic non-electoral representation. It would be fruitful to explore whether the identified non-electoral mechanisms also secure democratic representation when individual citizens act as non-elected representatives.

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Conflict of interest

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The Responsibility of an Audience: Assessing the Legitimacy of Non-elected Representatives in Governance Networks

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ABSTRACT

Non-elected actors in governance networks are legitimate representatives when the constituency accepts their claims of representation. However, not all constituents have the resources to approve or oppose this representation. Consequently, I argue that the audience, often the decision-making authority, which enables non-elected actors to act as representatives has a responsibility to consider their legitimacy. Drawing on seven business and urban development networks in Norway, this article explores how the decision-making authority considers credibility, qualifications and connectedness to legitimise non-elected representatives in governance networks. Through interviews with civil servants and politicians organising and participating in the network, relevant documents and observations, this article demonstrates that the decision-making authority legitimises non-elected representatives based on credibility and qualifications rather than connectedness with the constituency. The decision-making authority believes that claims grounded in specialist expertise, self-representation and shared experiences with the constituency legitimise non-elected representatives. Similarly, truthful representatives are considered legitimate. Finally, the decision-making authority is divided with regards to how the interactive process between the non-elected representative and the constituency legitimises the content of the representation.

KEYWORDS

Non-electoral representation; representative claim; governance networks; legitimacy; representative democracy

Introduction

In representative democracies today, elected representatives are no longer the only actors who speak on behalf of others (Knappe, 2017). Non-elected representatives are becoming a supplement to the formally elected representatives. Several non-elected actors from employers' organisations, trade unions, NGOs, celebrities, businesses, activists, and volunteer associations are taking a central role politically as representatives of affected groups, interests, values or causes (Maia 2012; Montanaro, 2019). Representation is more than territorial representation, and a representative is more than someone with a mandate from voters (Montanaro, 2017).

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Involving these non-elected representatives in politics is considered a way of strengthening the representative democracy in crisis, beyond elections, political parties, voter turnout, and governing institutions (de Wilde, 2019; van de Bovenkamp and Vollaard, 2018). The increasing use of participatory arrangements, direct participation, public debates, and social movements in policymaking has created public spheres for non-elected actors to behave as representatives although they are not democratically elected (de Wilde, 2019; Guasti & Geissel, 2019a; Saward, 2010; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018).

Non-elected representatives, who are exempt from electoral procedures, raise concerns about democratic legitimacy (Maia, 2012). Saward's (2010, p. 145) theory of representative claims suggests that non-elected representatives are legitimate when the constituency accepts the content of the representation. However, disadvantaged subgroups within the constituency may not have the resources to approve or oppose representation. I therefore argue that the audience which claims of representation are directed at, i.e. the decision-making authority, has a responsibility to consider the legitimacy of non-elected representatives (Chapman and Lowndes, 2014; de Wilde, 2019; Guasti & Geissel, 2019a; Knappe, 2017). Building on Chapman and Lowndes (2014, p. 288), the decision-making authority may ensure that accurate representation occurs through paying attention to the non-elected representative's credibility, qualifications and connectedness. Without these considerations, some constituents' interests might go entirely unrepresented (Montanaro, 2017, Ch. 3).

In governance networks, which are described as 'self-regulating horizontal articulations of interdependent, but operationally autonomous, actors from the public and/or private sectors' (Sørensen & Torfing, 2018, p. 304), Chapman & Lowndes (2014) find that non-elected actors function as representatives. Given that governance networks struggle with inclusiveness, it becomes essential to understand the participating elite or sub-elite in discussing networks as a supplement to representative democracy (Hendriks, 2008; Klinke, 2017; Sørensen & Torfing, 2018; Torfing et al., 2012). If these networks are without actors who are legitimate representatives, they might produce undesirable ideas, solutions and even policies (Torfing et al., 2009). Having a decision-making authority that assesses legitimacy of participating non-elected representatives can ultimately reduce the democratic problem of governance networks. This paper therefore explores *how the decision-making authority considers credibility, qualifications and connectedness to legitimise non-elected representatives in governance networks*.

The majority of studies on non-electoral representation are theoretical. The few empirical studies focus on justifications for non-elected representatives from the perspective of certain actors such as civil society groups, social movements or faith representatives. Empirical studies also investigate representatives surrounding elections and political parties, or they focus on non-elected representatives within a given policy area (de Wilde, 2019; Guasti & Almeida, 2019; Heinisch & Werner, 2019; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018). While the number of empirical studies is growing, the function of the audience in legitimising non-elected representatives, which I intend to investigate in this paper, is an area sparsely examined (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; de Wilde, 2019; Guasti & Geissel, 2019b). In the context of governance networks, empirical studies have so far only considered non-electoral representation expressed by the network actors themselves (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Derkzen & Bock, 2009; Hendriks, 2009;

Torfing et al., 2009) or the democratic legitimacy of the entire network in terms of input, throughput and output legitimacy (Ayres, 2020). In this paper, I add an audience's perspective on non-electoral representatives in governance networks.

To understand how the decision-making authority legitimises non-elected representatives in governance networks, I explore seven networks associated with business and urban development. This study focuses on the decision-making authority's acknowledgement of organised non-elected representatives, the reason for this being that they often have more resources than individuals to influence policymaking (Montanaro, 2017). This resource-rich economic sub-elite, highly present in business and urban development networks, may also be motivated to promote self-interests or the interests of advantaged sub-groups (Dür & Mateo, 2014; Hendriks, 2009; Montanaro, 2017). To cover the diversity of organised actors, the networks selected include different types of organisations, e.g. labour unions, private businesses, non-profit foundations and employers' organisations.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the next section, I introduce the theoretical framework of representative claims, non-electoral representation and governance networks before describing the methods used to answer my research question. After that, I present the results of how decision-making authorities consider the credibility, qualifications and connectedness of organised non-elected representatives. Before concluding the paper, I discuss how the decision-making authority considers the legitimacy of non-elected representatives.

The Legitimacy of Non-electoral Representation in Governance Networks

The literature on representation often uses Pitkin's (1972) concepts of formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation originating from electoral procedures. These concepts are also used to study representation in governance networks (Derkzen & Bock, 2009; Hendriks, 2009). Saward (2010, Ch. 2) in his recent theory defines representation as the activity of making claims to represent someone. The claims of representation are constructed in an interactive process between the representative and a constituency where organisations and individuals make, receive, accept, or reject representative claims. This study is among the first to apply this theory to organised interests in governance networks, describing representation in networks as the outcome of the dynamic relationship between a governance network actor and the constituents these actors portray.

Within this framework, individual or collective actors make claims that they themselves or their organisation (subject) represent affected groups, interests, or causes in public through an event or a series of events in more or less formal political processes (de Wilde, 2013; Saward, 2010; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018, p.101). Elected officials are therefore no longer the only actors who represent others (Knappe, 2017). Non-elected representatives are taking this role, reducing unequal participation and strengthening the representative democracy (van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2019). Building on Schlozman et al. (2015) this study focuses on organised non-elected representatives (p. 1018). In the investigated networks, I distinguish between interest organisations which represent their individual members and supporters, and politically active businesses, universities or other institutions without a membership basis which

represent any group or individuals affected (Berkhout, 2013; Binderkrantz, 2009; Schlozman et al., 2015). Using the theory of representative claim broadens the concept of representation. The theory allows organisations without members to represent interests and for membership groups to represent more broadly than their members (Berkhout, 2013; Montanaro, 2017; Schlozman et al., 2015). A labour union participating in the network may also represent non-unionised workers or those with membership in another organisation. Thus, stakeholders or members of the network participants are internally affected, while all those influenced by the network's outputs are externally affected (Knappe, 2017).

To function as a representative and potentially influence policy, one must be recognised as such by the targets of representation, i.e. the audience. Thus, for a non-elected representative to exist, the representative claim needs to be acknowledged by the audience (de Wilde, 2013; 2019). To further specify, I will base my definition of the audience on Guasti and Geissel (2019b) – as the decision-making authority which listens to, includes and responds to representatives (p. 104). In a governance network, the decision-making authority rests with the civil servants and politicians initiating and organising the network, selecting participants and participating in the network. The decision-making authority may recognise actors because of their ability to represent others, but also due to their status, fame or position (Montanaro, 2017). Selecting participants for the governance network can indicate recognition of actors as representatives (Berkhout, 2013; Knappe, 2017). Whether politicians and civil servants include actors because of their representativeness and whether they have a responsibility to consider the accuracy of representation is explored in this paper.

A non-elected representative is successful when the audience considers the act of representation positively, but they are only democratically legitimate when accepted by the constituency of affected or potentially affected interests (Disch, 2015; Montanaro, 2017; Saward, 2010). Legitimacy also says something about the quality of representative claims. A good claim enables the constituency to be in favour of or opposed to the non-elected representative (de Wilde, 2019). To determine whether one supports the representatives, claims of representation must be explicit and rich in information. The necessary information consists of clarifications on accountability, justifications as to why the claim-maker represents a particular group or interest, and statements which create a collective political identity (Arnesen & Peters, 2018; de Wilde, 2019). Studying faith representatives in urban governance partnerships, Chapman and Lowndes (2014) suggest four indicators to determine the quality of non-electoral claims: added contribution of claims, authenticity, horizontal connectedness, and attributes and skills of the representative. *Added contribution of claims* refers to considerations regarding whether claims provide specific specialist knowledge, are dynamic over time, fluid without spatial boundaries, explicit for new audiences, and share values with constituents (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014, p. 286). Claims with these characteristics contain information on justification (de Wilde, 2019). *Authenticity* means how genuine the claimants are, the credibility of what is claimed, and whether the claims are made independently of formal electoral processes. *Horizontal connectedness* concerns the representatives' visibility towards, and their dialogue with, the constituency of affected groups, interests, communities, and organisations (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014, p. 286). Representative claims may include information on accountability to ensure horizontal connectedness (de Wilde, 2019). In

other words, the representatives' responsiveness to feedback when formulating, explaining, and justifying claims (Maia, 2012). Finally, the *skills and attributes of the representatives* mean their communication skills, knowledge of and matching values with the constituency, openness, and their ability to accommodate input (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014, p. 286). In governance networks, as investigated in this article, legitimacy therefore refers to whether the constituency accepts individual network participants making claims and the content of their spoken claims.

Although representative claims must have a certain quality for the constituency to determine the legitimacy of the representative, not all constituents have the opportunity to voice their opinion when they decide the representative's legitimacy (Montanaro, 2012; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018). Disadvantaged sub-groups in the constituency may not have the resources to express agreement or disagreement with the non-elected representative (Montanaro, 2017). Less privileged groups are also more unlikely to use organisational mechanisms such as leadership elections, withdrawal of membership or followership, meeting attendance and donations to control organised non-elected representatives (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018; Montanaro, 2017; Schlozman et al., 2015). Consequently, the disparity in power may result in non-electoral representation which is biased towards the most powerful in the constituency (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Knappe, 2017). Following Chapman and Lowndes (2014, p. 287), I, therefore, argue that responsibility to interpret the legitimacy of non-electoral representatives is placed on the targets of representation, i.e. the decision-making authority. This decision-making authority can, when paying attention to what is represented, secure that representation is accurate (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018).

Although Chapman and Lowndes (2014, p. 286-287) emphasise that decision-makers have a responsibility to recognise legitimate non-elected representatives, they do not develop their indicators with the audience in mind. Neither does de Wilde (2019). Building on this work, but adjusting it to the audience's determining the legitimacy in the field of business and urban development, I suggest that non-elected representatives are legitimate if representative claims are credible and the representative is qualified and connected to a constituency. These three factors are arguments that the decision-making authority may use to legitimise network actors as representatives. *Credibility* is defined as justifications of representation referred to in representative claims. It is operationalised using non-elected representatives' explanations of why they represent what they do. This argument is similar to Chapman and Lowndes' (2014, p. 286) indicator of the added contribution of claims. Representative claims are justified on the grounds of i) position in the society; ii) tradition and standing on moral issues; iii) specialist expertise; iv) shared experiences, values and identity; v) self-representation or vi) popular support and unheard perspectives (Saward, 2010, Ch. 4; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018, p. 101). Position, expertise, competence or status are found to be reasons why decision-makers include non-elected actors in networks (Hendriks, 2008; 2009). Decision-makers ascribe legitimacy to interest organisations because of their expertise and information about public preferences (Flöthe, 2019). Altogether, information is a valued resource among all network actors (Torfing et al., 2012). *Qualification*s legitimise non-elected representatives based on their attributes and skills. A representative with a character and representative claims that 'ring true' can qualify representatives and make them legitimate (Saward, 2010, p. 103-104). Decision-makers' trust in network

actors is crucial for a functioning governance network (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012). Studies show that decision-makers also acknowledge non-elected representatives who are truthful, charismatic, well networked and with good communication skills (Chapman, 2012; Chapman & Lowndes, 2014). Thus, qualification is operationalised as the network actor's truthfulness and collaborative character. The argument combines Chapman and Lowndes' (2014, p. 286) indicators of authenticity with the skills and attributes of the representative. Finally, *connectedness* is the relationship between the representative and the constituency. An important part of this relationship is the representatives' visibility, responsiveness to feedback and that claims contain clarifications on accountability. Non-elected representatives are responsive when they explain their behaviour to the constituency and adjust it in line with the views of the constituency (de Wilde, 2019; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018). Connectedness is operationalised as the network actors' perceived interaction with the constituency and how this interaction affects what is represented in the network. This argument shares characteristics with Chapman and Lowndes' (2014, p. 286) indicator of horizontal connectedness. Governance networks, interest organisations and private businesses are all found to struggle with accountability (Aarsæther et al., 2009; Hendriks, 2008; Schlozman et al., 2015). However, decision-makers use high membership, supporter or even subscriber density, which indicates a large constituency, to legitimise organised actors. Internal democratic processes in interest groups signal accurate representation which may also have a legitimising function (Binderkrantz, 2009; Fraussen et al., 2015; Fraussen & Halpin, 2018). In sum, I have applied general arguments on the legitimacy of non-elected representatives to explore how the decision-making authority might use credibility, qualifications, and connectedness to legitimise actors in governance networks as non-elected representatives.

Methods

This study investigates business and urban development networks in Norway organised around the functioning of commercial and social activities in city areas. The networks located in Oslo, Kristiansand and Tromsø touch upon issues such as climate and environment, transportation, retail, tourism and liveability. Thus, they are essential in dealing with the conditions for how industry, tourists and citizens use urban areas. These complex cross-sectional issues are dependent on the coordination of public and private resources (Pierre, 2005, 2016). In this context, the cities of Oslo, Kristiansand and Tromsø organise governance networks to facilitate collaboration between public and private actors. These cities are selected because of their richness in available information, although all are regional centres in the northern, southern and eastern part of Norway, respectively.

In this study, I explore how the decision-making authority argues to legitimise organised non-elected representatives in governance networks. Thus, I aim to contribute to a theory of audience acknowledgement of non-elected representatives. To cover the diversity of organised non-elected representatives, I study three types of governance networks which include different organised actors. The organised actors can be split into two groups: interest organisations with a membership basis and politically active organisations without members. The latter are private businesses, public entities such as

universities or hospitals, business clusters and non-profit foundations. Organisations with individual members are mainly economic interest organisations such as employers' organisations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, real estate associations, and city-centre, retail, business and residents' associations (Castiglione and Warren, 2019; Schlozman et al., 2015). One of the networks includes organisations without members, another includes primarily membership organisations, and the third consists of a combination of organisations with and without members. The first network, which I have labelled the *inclusive informational network*, is comprised of businesses, non-profit foundations, hospitals and universities, the exception being an employer organisation and city-centre association. The second network named the *qualified consensus network* restricts participation to selected interest organisations. Finally, the third network, which I have called the *professional action network*, includes a mix of interest organisations and businesses. All three networks are present in Oslo. The two networks in Kristiansand take the form of inclusive informational networks, while a qualified consensus network and a professional action network are present in Tromsø. In summary, the seven business and urban development networks selected operate within the same context, that is they are organised around issues which affect the same group of people and similar departments and municipal agencies govern them. They are different in terms of types of organised non-elected representatives included.

Data is collected from multiple sources: interviews with decision-making authorities, relevant documents from the networks, and observations from network meetings. Interview data were collected between December 2019 and November 2020 from 26 semi-structured interviews with actors from the decision-making authorities in Oslo, Kristiansand and Tromsø. The respondents are the civil servants and politicians who have initiated, organised, and, on several occasions, participated in the business and urban development networks I have investigated. They have had a say in the final decisions on the content of the networks, who has been invited to participate, the function of the networks, and how network discussions have been used in local policymaking. The respondents are four actors from national government agencies (directorates), one politician and twenty-one civil servants. The interviewed respondents were identified through established professional contacts, minutes from network meetings, searches on the municipal website, and through snowballing. Using semi-structured interviews allows me to investigate individual attitudes towards the concept of legitimacy in detail and to explore the reasons behind the respondents' views. The flexibility to adjust and add questions as the interview progresses is valuable to capture these theoretical concepts (Mosley, 2013). The decision-making authority was asked for its response on network actors' behaviour such as their actions, spoken arguments, opinion and comments expressed in the network. The interviews lasted for approximately 45 min. To supplement what several of the respondents already had explained in the interviews, I analysed relevant publicly available documents from 2015 to 2020. These 69 documents include meeting minutes, agendas, presentations held at the meetings and external seminars, and evaluation reports. The documents are listed in Appendix A. To enrich the data further, I participated in and observed two network meetings in February and March 2020. The sessions lasted between two and three hours and were organised as a combination of presentations and group discussions. The number of network members present varied from around 30 participants in the first meeting to 70 participants in the second.

Using NVivo, all the data sources have been coded according to the three arguments of legitimacy, i.e. credibility, qualifications, and connectedness.

Findings

The primary purpose of this empirical analysis is to understand how credibility, qualifications, and connectedness legitimise governance network actors as non-elected representatives. The results revealed that the decision-making authority believes network actors make representative claims. Thus, the network actors are non-elected representatives. This recognition applies regardless of whether the network actor is an organisation with or without members. However, there is a tendency among the respondents that organisations which do not have members to a lesser degree are acknowledged as representatives compared to membership organisations.

Furthermore, the decision-making authority does not view individual network participants as the representative. Instead, it is the whole organisation which is acknowledged as a non-elected representative; thus, what the individual participant communicates is considered the content of what the organisation represents. Therefore, the findings present how the decision-making authority legitimises organisations as non-elected representatives, although the respondents were asked about individual network participants. All network minutes present the network or the private actors in the network as unitary in their view on particular issues. However, when references to individual statements are made, the minutes emphasise the organisation the individual is affiliated with, rather than the person. In general, I find that public documents concerning governance networks are objective. The content therefore rarely reveals the decision-making authority's response to non-elected representatives.

Credibility

Credibility is the decision-making authorities' understanding of how representation is explained in claims of representation. The representative claims may contain references to organisational position, tradition and standing on moral issues, specialist expertise, shared experiences, values and identity, self-representation, or popular support and unheard perspectives for the decision-making authority to legitimise non-elected representatives.

First, the decision-making authority legitimises non-elected representatives in governance networks because they have *specialist expertise.* The respondents explain that this means they believe the representative's opinions or arguments contain relevant knowledge they themselves do not hold. The interviews and documents show that specialist expertise is most often used to legitimise non-elected representatives. Organisations with no members offer their expertise by describing employees', students' or customers' typical workdays. Membership organisations have access to their expertise indirectly through their members. Interaction with employees, customers, students or members gives the non-elected representatives an understanding of the needs of those affected by network outcomes. As the senior advisor in a municipal agency described, the representatives deliver

> first and foremost local expertise, they represent others that report back to them when things don't work. They also have knowledge about the industry, what trends occur, changes that happen – valuable information for the decision-makers.

The decision-making authority emphasises that it cannot handle the professional expertise required within business and urban development in terms of complex issues such as transport, logistics, retail, tourism and real-estate development by itself. The respondents agree that they need experienced private actors to provide them with insights into the challenges they might face as a result of existing policy. Network minutes and reports show that the non-elected representatives repeatedly are encouraged to present their experiences in the network as input to policy.

Secondly, the interviewees legitimised organisations without members as representatives based on *self-representation*. These non-membership organisations are seen as non-elected representatives of their own interests, which are not heard elsewhere. Using stories from employees', students' or customers' workdays to justify why they oppose or support an issue discussed in the network also contains an element of self-representation. In a policy area such as business and urban development, which is often driven by economic interests, it would be strange if one did not self-represent. Among several other respondents, a senior advisor in a municipal agency with several years of experience within business development opined,

> of course, the advantaged [private business] see opportunities for their own business, to position themselves in the market and represent their interests. Still, my experience is that many of the issues that emerge, also those promoted by a particular company, apply to several of the others.

The respondents further mentioned that self-representation in itself is not sufficient to legitimise non-elected representatives. In combination with specialist expertise, self-representation becomes a reason to legitimise representatives.

Thirdly, the respondents use membership organisations' references to *shared experiences, values, and identity* to legitimise them as non-elected representatives. Interest organisations are legitimised as non-elected representatives who act for those with material stakes in network discussions, i.e. their members or at least a majority of their members. The decision-making authority believes membership organisations' speech acts are on behalf of those who work in transportation, retail, restaurants, hotels and tourism. All of these entities have a stake in business and urban development. City council minutes refer to organisations with individual members as representatives of 'the industry'. A senior advisor in a municipal agency explained that they, as the decision-making authority, challenge membership organisations to not only be available to their members. Thus, membership organisations may be expected to represent more broadly than their membership basis. Several respondents also acknowledge non-elected representatives in networks based on them sharing identity with the constituency. Previous work experience, within for example transport of goods and services, indicates a shared identity with these members. In combination, the interviews and documents show that shared experiences also justify claims of representation by organisations without members. The organisations without members represent business companions with coinciding interests as themselves. A director of a municipal agency emphasised that 'the organisations I talk about are competent, advantaged industry organisations, which are sort of trusted by the industry itself as their representatives'.

Finally, respondents from the inclusive informational network legitimise non-elected representatives in networks because their representation contains recognition of *popular support and unheard perspectives*. In their view, the representatives represent important issues that have broad popular support, but are not voiced elsewhere. Climate, environment, the greening of industry, circular economy, liveable cities and end-user experiences, in other words sustainable development, are causes which according to the respondents require additional representation, thereby legitimising non-elected representatives.

Qualifications

Qualifications refer to the perceived attributes and skills of non-elected representatives. Hence, qualifications legitimise the makers of the representative claims. Since the decision-making authority considers the organisation the non-elected representative, charisma, personal communication and networking skills rarely legitimise non-elected representatives. Nonetheless, some respondents value confident and enthusiastic network participants, a clear organisational mandate, and the individual's position within the organisation. Having the head of an organisation present is perceived to increase the legitimacy of the representative because the head makes final decisions.

Findings reveal that *truthful* arguments, stories and assertions presented in the network are a qualification which legitimises organised actors as non-elected representatives. When asked, the respondents considered both organisation with and without members to be truthful non-elected representatives in issues related to the sector they operate in, their mandate and the expertise they hold, e.g. transport, real estate, or retail. A senior advisor in the municipality commented that 'they are truthful in the sense that they have expert knowledge'. Two senior advisors with several years of experience within urban development found the non-elected representatives in governance networks to be trustworthy when: i) they adjust their views as additional knowledge is produced, ii) it is known who they represent, and iii) they make it clear if they are expressing something mainly for their personal advantage.

The interviews uncover that trust is constructed through previous positive collaborative experiences. Thus, previous collaboration with public authorities is indirectly a qualification which may legitimise non-elected representatives. In presentations held in the network, participating organisations are encouraged to engage in other areas in local politics, e.g. in consultations and workshops. Previous collaborative experiences as a legitimising quality apply to both organisations with and without membership.

Although there is a general perception of the organisations being truthful non-elected representatives, the respondents are unsure of the degree to which they can be trusted. The respondents have experienced that especially organisations without members sometimes portray the situation worse than necessary. In general, private businesses are less trusted when discussing society as a whole. A director of a municipal agency said that 'they are somewhat blind to general societal perspectives, more focused on their own interests'. The respondents also say that they have to pay attention to whether the organised non-elected representatives express self-interests. As one director of a municipal agency described, 'truthfulness is a tough question. They [the non-elected representatives] use arguments which they cannot document to influence the outcome for what

it is worth'. Decision-making authorities find promotions of self-interest relatively easy to detect. Undocumented statements, statistics or documented arguments which benefit individual needs are often provided by the most active or economically well-off actors. To avoid such biased information, the decision-making authority orders research and consultancy reports and has the findings presented and discussed at meetings. The decision-making authority therefore emphasises the importance of interpreting what is being said and by whom to reduce the effect of self-interest. A few respondents emphasised that the willingness to practice this behaviour depends on whether the individual participant is perceived as trustworthy, rather than on the organisation.

Connectedness

Connectedness refers to the decision-making authority legitimising non-elected representatives because they interact with the constituency to negotiate what is represented. What became evident when interviewing respondents about the relationship between non-elected representatives and their constituency was that the respondents primarily considered membership organisations to have a constituency which needed to be engaged in constructing representation. The constituency is the membership basis of the organisation. The decision-making authority does not reflect upon if and how organisations without members interact with their constituency.

The findings, which apply to membership organisations, indicate that the decision-making authority responds to connectedness in two ways. One group of respondents gives this issue little thought, while the other group is more conscious. Thus, decision-making authorities do not necessarily legitimise non-elected representatives because they negotiate the content of representation with the constituency.

The first group of respondents take it for granted that membership organisations explain their actions to their members. The respondents assume that network actors actively inform and get feedback from their members about the discussions, conclusions and work conducted in the network. A senior advisor in a government agency with several years of experience working with private organisations said that

> I take it for granted that they have meetings with their membership basis or boards. Or some kind of internal newsletter – what do I know. […] I assume that they do not participate without telling someone.

Some of these respondents consider maintaining the relationship between the non-elected representative and a constituency to be the responsibility of the representatives themselves. The non-elected representatives' stories from members' workdays are sufficient evidence that a dynamic relationship between the representative and the constituency exists.

The second group of respondents, although significantly fewer, are conscious of the content of representation emerging through interaction between membership organisations and the constituency. The interviews reveal that it is the membership organisations' internal elections that make the decision-making authority rely on them being responsive to a constituency, thus legitimising them as representatives. Also, having membership organisations which include members in network meetings reinforces the perception of responsive representatives. Furthermore, these respondents also express

the dangers of relying on membership organisations. As outsiders, the interviewed decision-making authorities acknowledge that they do not know whether the organisation equally presents the opinions of all their members. Hence, the process of negotiating the content of representation is unknown to the decision-making authority. At the same time, the respondents comment that some members may not find it necessary to interact with the representative on what needs representation. With experience from the private sector, a senior municipal advisor expressed that

> it may be difficult for the membership organisations to engage their members to continually get their input because the members might think that [knowing what to represent] is what they [organisations] are paid to do. This [interaction] can be demanding, but in my experience they bring outcomes back and if necessary get input in advance [of network meetings].

Although the decision-making authority is divided on whether the representative's interaction with the constituency is legitimising, several respondents believe there are arrangements to ensure the representative relationship. The director of a government agency commented that

> I know [from participating] that this [network] is regularly on the agenda at general assemblies in the organisation, that their members are informed about ongoing activities in the network, and their feedback [from the members] is returned [to the network].

In addition, the interviewees identify membership meetings, individual contact, social media channels, newsletters, board meetings, websites, breakfast meetings and membership magazines as alternative arenas. The respondents found it difficult to provide an answer to whether these arrangements result in the representatives adjusting their perspectives, opinions and arguments. Some respondents had not participated in the network long enough to see adjustments happening, and those who did recognise changes in what was represented could not identify whether this was a result of the communication with the constituency, changing situations, societal trends or new knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study first of all support the theoretical assumption that actors in governance network function as non-elected representatives and that the decision-making authority, i.e. the audience, must recognise representatives and their claim-making for representatives to have an impact on politics. What further emerged was that the respondents in all seven networks acknowledge the organisation and not the individual network participant as the representative of a constituency. From the perspective of the audience, the individual participant making claims and the organisation they present as the representative is the same. This echoes studies which argue that a distinction between the individual claim-maker and the subject, i.e. movement or organisation does not make sense (de Wilde, 2013).

In exploring how the audience acknowledges non-elected representatives as legitimate representatives in the field of business and urban development policy, the empirical analysis revealed that credibility in connection with qualifications, rather than connectedness, legitimises non-elected representatives. Among credibility and qualification, the first is considered to be the most influential. I find that organisations with individual members are considered credible representatives when they explain how they represent

using specialist expertise and shared experiences of their members. Organisations without members are justified as credible representatives when they claim to represent on the basis of self-representing their specialist expertise. Thus, the decision-makers do not only ascribe legitimacy to interest organisations because of their expertise (Flöthe, 2019), but also to private businesses, universities and non-profit foundations. What also became evident was that considerations regarding the non-elected representatives' credibility often are the same as the reasons why some non-elected actors are included in the network at the expense of others (Hendriks, 2008; 2009).

Contrary to what others have found, individual participants' qualifications such as charisma, communication skills or their professional network rarely legitimise organised non-elected representatives in business and urban development networks (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014). However, similar to other studies (Chapman & Lowndes, 2014; Saward, 2010) truthfulness qualifies non-elected representatives. There are no differences between organisations with and without members in the degree to which they are perceived as truthful non-elected representatives. Thus, one may argue that the audience legitimises organised non-elected representatives who they experience as truthful in claiming to represent others. Indeed, the decision-makers' trust in participating non-elected representatives is important for a functioning governance network (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012).

Qualifications and credibility refer, albeit in different ways, to the information contained in claims the representatives present in the network and whether or not this information can be trusted. Findings show that through previous experience in collaborating with the representatives, the decision-making authority considers the representatives' information on their own or shared experiences and specialist expertise trustworthy. Information which the decision-making authority itself does not hold is a valued resource among non-elected representatives in governance networks. The relevant documents support this and show that several non-elected representatives in meetings present their experiences, current work or ongoing struggles related to issues discussed in the network. Hence, they provide the decision-making authority with information about, for instance, implemented policies, regulations or conflicts. Therefore, the information gained through representation legitimises non-elected representatives in governance networks. This finding supports de Wilde's (2019, p. 6) argument that legitimate non-elected representatives provide high-quality claims which are rich and detailed in information.

What further emerged is that the decision-making authority is divided when it comes to considering the relationship between the representative and the constituency when legitimising non-elected representatives in governance networks. Connectedness has the most variation in its use to legitimise non-elected representatives. The decision-making authority does not recognise organisations without members to interact with a constituency, which may be due to the fact that these organisations are found to self-represent. The decision-making authority does not automatically think of employees, customers or students as a constituency. Without questioning current practices, one group of respondents takes for granted that membership organisations explain their opinions, arguments and comments to a constituency, i.e. members. Interacting with the constituency to construct representative claims is deemed the responsibility of the representative. The other group of respondents expresses that internal democratic processes and inclusion of members in network meetings have a legitimising function of membership

organisations as non-elected representatives. Altogether, this finding aligns with previous studies which suggest that governance networks and network actors struggle with their accountability to those outside the networks (Aars & Fimreite, 2005; Aarsæther et al., 2009). Signals from the constituency to the audience that non-elected representation is based upon constant consent are theoretically crucial for the legitimacy of a non-elected representative (Saward, 2010). This study indicates that this is not necessarily the case empirically. Accountability may not provide the audience with an argument to legitimise the non-elected representatives in governance networks. The information non-elected representatives bring to the network is the primary reason for an audience to legitimise non-elected representatives. Again, this raises questions about the transparency of governance networks, the opportunity of constituents to express judgement, and even networks' contribution to representative democracy.

Given these findings, future research should focus on whether the arguments that legitimise organised non-electoral representatives also apply to other types of non-elected, and even elected, representatives in governance networks. Activists, celebrities and experts as non-elected representatives might require different audience acknowledgement than organised non-elected representatives, and thus the results might differ elsewhere. Valuable insights can also be expected from a comparative study, on whether the findings apply to the audience of organised non-elected representatives in connection with, for example, elections, social movements, and political parties. These representatives have a different audience which might, in turn, legitimise non-elected representatives differently.

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Appendix

Relevant documents from the inclusive informational network:

- Byrådssak Oslo 1098/19, 1097/19 and 17/2019
- Presentation held at the February 5, 2020 Oslo network meeting: Climate accounts and climate budget
- Annual report Oslo 2018
- Field notes Oslo February 5, 2020 and March 3, 2020
- Bystyresak Kristiansand 46/17, 201513219–523 and 201513219–540
- Strategisk næringsplan for Kristiansandsregionen 2015–2018 and Handlingsprogram 2018–2021
- Note on 'Organising business development in Kristiansand' March 2, 2017 and 'Agreement Business Region Kristiansand' September 7, 2017.
- Report: 'Industry needs and consultation of Kommunedelplan havneområde nord, Kongsgård-Vige'

Relevant documents from the qualified consensus network:

- Byrådssak Oslo 1185/05
- Project plan Oslo 2016
- Agenda Oslo meetings: September 9, 2016, February 9, 2018, September 21, 2018, November 11, 2018, December 7, 2018, June 14, 2019, and November 29, 2019
- Minutes Oslo meetings: June 24, 2016, March 2, 2017, November 3, 2017, March 2, 2017, April 6, 2018, December 7, 2018, June 8, 2018, February 8, 2019, June 14, 2019, and January 31, 2020.
- Reports: 'Evaluation of the Qualified Consensus Network Oslo 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019' and 'Summary of excursion April 2019'.
- Minutes Tromsø meetings: March 13, 2017, September 15, 2017, November 10, 2017, February 2, 2018, April 4, 2018, September 7, 2018, October 12, 2018, February, 18, 2019 and September 23, 2019.
- Note on election of members May, 2, 2018.

Relevant documents from the professional action network:

- Agenda Oslo meetings: September 3, 2018 and March 8, 2019.
- Minutes Oslo meetings: March 3, 2016, June 16, 2016, September 1, 2016, September 9, 2016, November 29, 2016, December 1, 2017, March 7, 2018, July 1, 2018, September 3, 2018, November 11, 2018 and March 8, 2019.
- Report: 'More efficient and climate-friendly city logistics: Second package of measures' Oslo.
- Note on Oslo workshop May 5, 2017 and the Car-free City Life Project Oslo November 21, 2016.
- Invitation and minutes Tromsø meetings: October 30, 2017 and March 9, 2020.
- Presentation held at Tromsø meeting March 9, 2020 and at external seminar October 15, 2018.
- Consultation draft 'Urban freight plan 2020-2024' and response from interest organisation January 31, 2020.