Representation in times of crisis: MP-voter congruence over two visions of representation in Portugal

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Paper to be presented at the 8th ECPR Conference, Glasgow, 3-6 September 2014

Panel: Relationships Between MPs and Citizens and Social Groups

First draft version, please do not cite without the permission of the authors

Introduction

Subsequent to the financial collapse in the US (2007-2008) and soon after the outbreak of the Greek sovereign debt crisis (beginning of 2010), Portugal was identified as a high-risk investment country. Consequently, Portugal started to sink into an economic crisis, and in March 2011 it requested the intervention of international lenders, the so-called troika (integrating the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund). The intervention program pushed the government to implement a series of severe austerity measures, creating a downward spiral of recession characterized by rising unemployment, declining state revenue, persistent budget deficits, new austerity measures and deeper recession. The overall outcome has been a sharp drop in the standard of living in Portugal.
The economic downturn is expected to have had a widespread impact on the functioning of the political system. It has already been shown that it has changed the political leaders’ discourses, as well as citizens’ channels and intensity of political participation (Blyth, 2013; Monastiriotis et al, 2013; Rüdig and Karyotis, 2013; Ponticelli and Voth, 2011). It is also known that voters specially care about policy issues such as employment and economic growth, which are issues driven by fiscal policy (Rudder, 2013: 356) and that dissatisfaction regarding these policy outcomes, if intense and prolonged, can lead to policy and institutional change (Cooper, 2013). Generally considered the institutional link between citizens and the political sphere, political parties are a core object of these potential institutional changes in times of deep economic crisis. In Portugal, this expectation is mainly due to increased feelings of disaffection and mistrust towards the political system in place before the crisis, particularly towards political parties (Magalhães 2004), and that new data confirms the crisis has accentuated (Teixeira et al., forthcoming). The literature suggests that economic conditions are thoroughly connected to the functioning of democracy and political representation (Schmidt, 2009; Lefkofridi et al., 2012), making it reasonable to predict that the severe economic crisis in Portugal since 2010 has affected not only the performance of the representation but also the way citizens and MPs evaluate this process.

A relevant part of the research on congruence carried out thus far has been descriptive, basically comparing elites with voters (eg. Converse and Pierce 1986; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Miller et al. 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999; Powell 2000; Valen and Narud 2007), while there is also substantial literature on dynamic representation (eg. Stimson, 1995; Erikson, 2002; Soroka and Wlezien, 2005; Kang and Powell, 2010; Bonafont and Palau 2011). Among these, only few studies have focused on party-electorate policy congruence (McAllister 1991; Thomassen 1994; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999; Soroka and Wlezien, 2005; Bonafont and Palau 2011; Belchior and Freire, 2013), and as far as we are aware, none has explored the importance of an economic crisis on the evaluation of the visions of representation or on the changes to the link between MPs and voters.
Our paper has three main goals, all focused on the comparative analysis before (2008) and after the emergence of the economic crisis in Portugal (2012):

- First, to explore how much the economic crisis is associated with a change in patterns of representation, both among voters and MPs.
- Second, to assess the levels of MP-voter congruence using measures of congruence regarding two visions of representation and policy issues.
- Finally, to assess the relevance of voters' visions of representation on the levels of congruence.

The fact that Portugal is among the countries that suffered the brunt of the economic crisis makes it a relevant case study as regards its potential political consequences. The Portuguese electoral system is generally regarded as generating few incentives for strong ties between MPs and voters. Indeed, Portugal is seen as one of the European countries with the weakest capacity for this sort of linkage. Parties control the elective process (it has a proportional system with closed lists) and the parliamentary activity (which is highly disciplined) and, consequently, the incentive to establish a direct linkage between voters and elected representatives at the constituency level is very weak (Leston-Bandeira, 2011; Belchior and Freire, 2013). The crisis can be seen as a compounding event, which may have pushed towards a change of preferences over representation especially among citizens.

Although the limitations of a single case study, the relative uniqueness of the occurrence of a deep economic crisis combined with the opportunity of using appropriate data (we rely on exceptional data that allows comparing MPs and voters in 2008 and 2012) to explore its potential consequences on representation, make the Portuguese case study a relevant one for such a research.

Another limitation of the research derives from studying only two points in time: 2008 and 2012. It is not possible to be sure that the reason for any detected change be due to the economic crisis. Significant differences in findings between those two points in time should be looked at as probably related to the crisis, but without disregarding other potential causes.
The article begins by presenting a literature review on the topics of representation and the economic crisis. It then summarizes the data sources, analysis options and theoretical expectations. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the empirical findings.

**On representation and the economic crisis**

Democracy can generally be defined as the procedure of collective decision-making over which citizens exert control the most democratic arrangement being that in which all members of the collectivity have equal rights to directly take part in the decision-making process (Beetham, 1993: 55, 61-6). However, the concept of democracy is neither that simple nor consensual. There is not just one, but several models of democracy (Held, 1996). We can briefly acknowledge two ideal type models of representative democracy: one more anchored to elites theories; the other supported on the theories of participatory democracy. Both models aim at reaching the common good of the community, although they diverge as to the priorities at stake, as well as concerning the role of the political power in pursuing it. Modern interpretations of the first theories strongly rely on the Shumpeterian procedural perspective of democracy: political expertise relies on the elites, which legitimates their power, and the public should abstain from intervening in the political process in-between elections (1996 (1942)). Conversely, the theories of participatory democracy are fundamentally based on the principle of equality of all individuals, and on the associated skepticism regarding the elite's abilities to serve the common good, thus justifying the emphasis on political participation of the public as the best way to reach the common good (e.g. Barber, 1984).

Inspired by Burke, and closely related with these two types of democracy, Eulau et al. (1959) build a typology of representatives’ foci and style of representation, the former signifying the conflict between local or national representation, and the latter between mandatory or independent representation. Although diverse combinations are possible, an arrangement that matches the local foci and the mandatory style of representation concedes relative decision power to citizens, while an arrangement that combines the national foci and the independent
style tends to concentrate the power at the elite level and to reduce citizens’ influence in policy
decision-making.

In their typology, Eulau et al. ignore the role of political parties, which are fundamental actors
in parliamentary systems (Andeweg, 2007). That is why we conceive two ideal types of visions
of representation combining the two models of democracy and Eulau’s et al. typology regarding
the style of representation. The institutional-independent type is focused on institutions,
conceptualizing the representation process as an outcome of political parties and party leaders
acting in accordance with an independent style of representation. In contrast to this elitist
model, the participatory-mandatory vision is concerned with citizens’ views and their relevance
in the decision-making process, assuming the preference for a mandatory style of representation.

Even acknowledging that representation is more than the mere correspondence of ideological or
policy positions between the representatives and the represented, a certain level of congruence is
a desirable indicator of a well performing liberal democracy (e.g. Pitkin 1967; Wessels, 1999:
137), although straightforward congruence is not viable (Pierce, 1999: 25; Thomasssen and
Schmitt, 1999: 186), and should not be understood as the legitimate vision of democratic
representation (e.g. Thomassen, 1994: 238, 257-8). While a rough measure, MP-voter
congruence (here adopted as a measure of representation performance) is an appealing and valid
measure to assess parties’ performance regarding their voters’ views.

The main conclusion from research on MP-voter congruence is that it is extremely difficult to
identify a clear tendency or pattern. Some argue that congruence tends to be low (Thomassen,
1994; Miller et al., 1999; Pierce, 1999); while others say there is evidence that policymakers
follow public preferences more often than not (Erikson et al., 2002: Chap. 8; Manza and Lomax,
2002; Kang and Powell, 2010). Above all, it seems that congruence varies greatly, particularly
depending on the issue at stake (Thomassen, 1994: 255; Thomassen, 1999: 45-52; Thomassen
and Schmitt, 1999: 199; Manza and Lomax, 2002), and that it tends to be greater for ideological
or highly politicized issues (Thomassen, 1994: 254-6. 1999: 53; Pierce, 1999: 30; Holmberg,
The impact of budget deficits and economic crisis on political parties’ stands and on the relationship between voters’ and the Congress has been deeply studied concerning American politics (eg. Thurber, 2013; Rudder, 2013; Cooper, 2013; Dood and Oppenheimer, 2013; Blyth, 2013: Chap.2) as well as in British politics, although to a lesser extent (eg. Brandenburg and Johns, 2013). The economic crisis in Southern Europe has also generated a growing literature in the last few years. It has generally pointed to the following political consequences: the risk of ungovernability and instability of cabinet formation (and the emergence of technocratic cabinets); acute austerity policy agendas; decline of conventional participation and rise of protest and even violent demonstrations; increasing electoral volatility; growing distrust and dissatisfaction with the political elite and the democratic system; realignment, fragmentation and polarization in party systems and the emergence of new patterns of party representation (eg. Gorjão, 2012; Verney and Bosco, 2013; Rüdig and Karyotis, 2013; Teixeira et al., forthcoming). Among these consequences, the ones at the MP-voters’ linkage level are the most relevant, not only because they are related to many of the consequences above, but also simply because representation is at the core of democracy.

Data, data analysis and theoretical expectations

The analysis focuses on the five political parties that currently have seats in the Portuguese Parliament. The centre-left Socialist Party (PS – Partido Socialista) and the center-right Social Democratic Party (PPD/PSD – Partido Social Democrata) became the country’s largest parties immediately following the Revolution of 25 April 1974. They are commonly considered catch-all parties (e.g. Lopes, 2004, 122) and have been alternating in government (either alone or in coalition) since 1976.

To the right of the PPD/PSD is the Democratic Social Centre/Popular Party (CDS/PP – Partido do Centro Democrático e Social/Partido Popular). Closest to the cadre party type (e.g. Lopes, 2004, 33, 36-8), it represents mainly Christian-democrat values and conservative voters. Despite its small size in electoral terms (usually below 10%), it has managed to present itself as a party
with the potential to form part of government coalitions, and has been included as such in government on a number of occasions (as is the case of the government that took office in 2011: a majoritarian PSD and CDS/PP coalition).

The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP – Partido Comunista Português) is a Marxist-Leninist party, and the only one that can properly be considered a mass party (e.g. Lopes, 2004, 79). Since 1987, the PCP has always stood for election in coalition (CDU – Coligação Democrática Unitária) with the Greens (PEV – Partido Ecologista “Os Verdes”). It has experienced a relative electoral decline, to slightly below 8% in the most recent legislative elections (2011), although it has faced some recovery in the 2014 European elections (it reached almost 13% of the votes).

Finally, the Left Block (BE – Bloco de Esquerda), the most recent party to emerge in the Portuguese Parliament, is a left-libertarian party. Its electoral performance was initially very low, with percentages of around 2%, but has grown, albeit never attaining 10%. In the recent 2011 and 2014 elections, it fell back to around 5%.

To study MPs and voters’ views of representation before and after the economic crisis, we use surveys of MPs and voters conducted in 2008 and 2012/2013. The 2008 MP survey (April and October) reached a total number of valid answers of 143 out of 230 (61.7%), while the 2012/2013 survey (June 2012 - May 2013) obtained 123 valid interviews (53.5%). In both cases a good representation of the parties in Portuguese Parliament was reached. As regards voters, the investigation rests on two surveys administered to Portuguese voters (2008 N = 1350; 2012 N = 1209), fielded in the beginning of 2008 (March – July) and end of 2012 (September - October). Both voters’ surveys were based on a multi-stage representative sample of the adult population living in the mainland. The four surveys were coordinated by a research team at ISCTE-IUL (further information on these surveys can be found online at: http://er.cies.iscte-iul.pt/node/42).

In order to contextualize the Portuguese case study in a comparative perspective, the analysis also makes use of other complementary surveys, namely: the Members of the European Parliament survey (1996) which deals with MEP candidates to the European Parliament (at: https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/sdesc2.asp?no=3078&db=e&doi=10.4232/1.3078); the
PIREDEU Candidate Survey (2009) that also deals with MEP candidates (at: http://www.piredeu.eu/public/Candidates.asp); and two surveys on representation in Spain administered to citizens (Estudio CIS N° 2588, Representación y Participación Política en España (2005), and Estudio CIS N° 2.930 Congruencia Ideológica entre Electores y Representantes Políticos (2012), both at: http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/8_cis/).

The article assesses the level of MP-voter congruence within political parties using Achen’s centrism (1978) as the main congruence measure, although percentages and means are also used. Centrism is the strongest measure for assessing how correspondent the opinions of party elites mirror the views of their average (or median) supporters (Golder and Stramski: 2010: 94).

It is measured by the following formulas:

\[
\hat{S}_j = \frac{\sum (a_{ij} - r_j)^2}{n_j}
\]

where \(a_{ij}\) is the position of voter \(ai\) in party \(j\), \(r_j\) the mean position of the elite in that party, and \(n_j\) the size of the sample. And,

\[
\hat{Y}_{j2} = \frac{\sum (a_{ij} - \bar{a}_j)^2}{(n_j - 1)}
\]

Which measures the variance for the electorate, where \(\bar{a}_j\) is the median position of the voters; and

\[
\hat{C}_j = \hat{S}_j - \hat{Y}_{j2}
\]

which measures the centrism in party \(j\). High centrism values indicate a mismatch between the voters and the elite; low values indicate the reverse.

Questions of representation and specifically of congruence between the electors and the elected are inextricably tied to regime legitimacy. It is reasonable to argue that the greater the degree of congruence between the preferences of the electorate and the deputies, the greater the probability the electorate will feel they are well represented and the greater the probability the legislators (and the government) will act in accordance with the people’s preferences. This maxim applies equally well (if not better) not only when examining congruence in specific
policy orientations but also when examining evaluations and preferences concerning aspects of
the functioning of the political system itself and its institutions.

In the US case the dominant doctrine has become substantially in favor of majoritarianism over
the centuries, and traits such as disdain for the rise of partisanship and plebiscitary politics, or
preference for the trustee legislative role are also relevant. The growing expectations regarding
political performance and severe dissatisfaction with government and Congress performance are
now raising questions on the traditional doctrine being outmoded (Cooper, 2013: 415-416, 427-
428). In Portugal the role of parties as the link between voters and representatives is reinforced
by the electoral system and a trustee style of representation seems to have been conquering
space (Leston-Bandeira, 2011). This could lead to the expectation that an institutional-
independent vision of representation would now tend to prevail in the Portuguese case. However, and by observing Figure 1, the crisis seems to have been moving Portuguese voters
apart from their representatives, and the growing distrust towards the functioning of the political
system suggests that a claim for a different model of representation might be at stake.

(Figure 1. HERE)

A wide-ranging negative trend after the emergence of the crisis is noticeable in Figure 1. Mean
differences of those items between 2008 and 2012 are modest but almost all statistically
significant. The crisis seems to have affected the level of satisfaction of Portuguese citizens
towards democracy, already low before the onset of the crisis. It has also chipped away from the
importance of political parties in democracy and the socializing role of parliament in the eyes of
the Portuguese population, suggesting the lack of confidence towards the core democratic
institutions. In terms of overall directionality, there seems to be a move of the citizenry away
from traditional and conventional forms of representation - no matter how modest - and towards
the 'participatory' vision of democracy.

Therefore, our main theoretical expectation is that, motivated by the economic crisis, the
growing dissatisfaction towards the political system would lead to a claim for a more
participatory-mandatory way of representation by citizens in detriment of an institutional-independent vision, and that would naturally move voters away from their representatives, who are expected to remain close to this last vision.

To test the hypothesis we use a set of six variables, plus two policy issues (the first four variables are measured using an agreement scale that runs from 1 – totally disagree, to 5 – totally agree; and the remaining variables use a scale that runs from 1 – totally disagree, to 4 – totally agree):

- 'An MP represents his party above all’;
- 'An MP represents his constituents above all’;
- 'An MP represents his district/region above all’;
- 'An MP represents the entire population above all’;
- 'The debates in Parliament contribute to the enlightenment of citizens’;
- 'Groups of independent citizens should be able to present lists of candidates to run for Members of Parliament’.

And the policy issues are:

- ‘Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people’;
- ‘The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if that means an increase of the taxes’.

The first six variables aim at measuring the two visions on representation under study: one institutional-independent focused in political parties as instruments between citizens and the political sphere (MPs should represent their own party above all, and the importance of debates in Parliament), the other participatory-mandatory focused on the direct role of citizens in the policy decision making (MPs should represent their constituencies, district/region, the entire population, and the possibility of groups of independent citizens running for MP positions).

Regarding parties’ performance, a high level of MP-voter congruence of representation or policy issues means the prevalence of the participatory-mandatory vision.
Findings

We start the empirical analysis by looking at some comparative data. Table 1 presents MEPs’ positions towards legislators’ roles between 1996 and 2009. Although our focus is not on MEPs but on MPs, using this data (the only one that is available for this purpose) provides us a comparative contextualization of the Portuguese case across countries and years. The general conclusion that derives from the table is a trend in most of the countries to a decrease of importance legislators give to representing the people in the country, the constituency, or all party voters, that is, a decrease in the participatory-mandatory vision of representation. At the same time, legislators tend to give more importance to representing all people in Europe and, although in a lesser number of countries, to representing the party. Notwithstanding this trend, by comparing both years, a reinforcement of the number of countries where legislators’ give more importance to representing all party voters (the most important role for most countries) can be found in 2009, which allows to conclude that the participatory-mandatory vision remains dominant.

Portugal is not part of this trend: it shows increasing importance of almost all roles in 2009, and representing all people in the country remains the most important in both years. Comparing it with Greece, the difference is that the Greek legislators consider in 2009 representing party voters the most important role. Similarly to most countries, representing all party voters is in both years the role that Spanish legislatives find the most important. In 2009 we are, however, at the onset of the crisis.

(Table 1. HERE)

Moving on to the questions intended to capture congruence between Portuguese MPs and voters, we first explore straightforward and absolute measures of congruence, and then move to centrism. Looking at Figures 2 and 3, Portuguese MPs appear to have moved significantly away from the ‘institutional-independent’ vision of representation in 2012, due to a significant drop in the percentage claiming that the main role of the MPs is to represent their party. The
positions of voters in these questions appear comparatively stable in relation to the positions of MPs.

However, this picture is reversed with regard to the educational/socializing effects of parliamentary debates. In this case, there is a relative stability of opinion among MPs, who appear convinced in large majorities about the positive contribution of debates; but the majority of voters in the 2008 sample supporting this idea had been overturned four years later.

On the question concerning the importance of having a low institutional threshold for citizens to run for parliamentary office, we observe no significant change: there is a stability of incongruence between voters and MPs. Overwhelming majorities of voters seem to value the ability to simply present lists in order to run for members of parliament before and during the crisis, whereas strong majorities of MPs reject this position at both points in time.

(Figure 2. HERE)

(Figure 3. HERE)

(Figure 4. HERE)

(Figure 5. HERE)

When it comes to Spanish voters, Figure 4 and 5 suggest the prevalence of a perception that political parties specially take into account party structures in decision-making and in a much lesser extent party voters or the circumscription, tendency that seems to have been aggravated in 2012, in consonance to what we have seen for Portuguese voters.

We now explore intra-party consonance regarding the six representation issues and two policy issues. The idea that ‘an MP represents his party above all’, characterizing the institutional-independent vision of representation, in Table 2, shows high percentages of agreement across all parties, with a tendency of decline in 2012 among the MPs of the parties in government (PSD and CDS/PP, with a drop of, respectively: 54.9% and 37.4%) and the MPs of the main party in opposition (PS, with a decrease of 39.3% in agreement). Those three parties were the ones involved in setting the memorandum with troika and who were in office since 2008 (first PS,
and then the PSD/CDS coalition). This increasing disagreement with MPs representing their parties can be partially explained by the external intervention that enforced a political program that was not effectively the government parties' program. It did not result from a discussion or negotiation with national leaders, but simply represented an imposed trade-off for Portugal to receive the bailout.

The other parties (on the left) also show a decrease in agreement with MPs representing their parties above all, but much less expressive. There is no significant change among voters regarding the agreement with this statement. CDS/PP voters are the exception showing an increase in agreement with the idea that an MP represents his party above all. This exception might be explained by the fact that this is the smallest party in the coalition in office in 2012 and this circumstance allowed its leaders to sometimes act discordantly regarding the leading party in the coalition. This behavior might have been interpreted by their voters not only as an affirmation of the party over the coalition's leader but also over troika's political program.

With the idea - ‘an MP represents his constituents above all’ - characterizing a participatory-mandatory vision, all political parties except CDU (which shows no significant differences across years or player, partially due to the fact that their voters and MPs had already low support for this view of representation in 2008) show a decrease in their agreement. This decrease is more relevant across MPs of the largest parties, and is only more relevant among voters of the BE. This is because in 2008 voters already tended to agree less with the idea that MPs represent their constituents than their representatives, and in 2012 MPs got closer to the voters’ position. The percentage of support of the idea that MPs represent their constituents in 2012 only reaches around 50% or less among voters. The percentage remains higher for MPs although it decreases significantly in 2012.

The percentage of agreement is generally lower for 'an MP represents the population above all' and 'an MP represents his district/region above all', than the previous indicators, although in certain cases a significant decline is visible in 2012.
'The debates in Parliament contribute to the enlightenment of citizens’ is an assumption that generally produces less support in 2012, slightly increasing at times only for MPs (BE, PSD and CDS/PP). The decrease of voters’ agreement with this statement transverses all political parties. Voters across parties strongly support the prospect of groups of independent citizens being able to present lists of candidates to run for MP (80% or more in both years). This produces high levels of dissonance since MPs do not share this position (except BE's). The tendency exhibited by the MPs of the coalition government is for an increasing support of those groups in 2012. These results are mostly confirmed by the mean and mean differences analysis (data not shown).

Regarding the two policy issues, the pattern of left parties (BE, CDU, and PS) is similar: MPs are more supportive than voters of both issues - income and wealth redistribution, and the maintenance of the levels of social protection – but since voters tend to support more these policies in 2012, an increasing in convergence between voters and MPs in these parties is observed. Government parties’ MPs generally show an increase in incongruence with their voters that, as other voters, tend to reinforce the support for such policies in 2012, while PSD and CDS MPs tend to be less supportive.

In summary, although a clear trend towards disagreement with MPs representing their parties or their constituents above all appears in 2012, especially among the “memorandum” parties (rejecting both visions of representation), the data shows no evidence of a growing dissonance between MPs and voters regarding issues of representation. Indeed, MPs seem to follow the same tendency as voters, although voters across parties tend to see MPs as representing more their own parties and less their constituencies when compared with MPs. The pattern is different concerning the two policy issues: in 2012 voters turn more supportive of redistributive and social protection policies, probably due to the austerity measures that followed the emergence of the crisis, which has promoted convergence with left-wing party MPs and divergence with right-wing party MPs, especially with the main party in government: PSD. Thus, representation and policy issues seem to follow different trends after the emergence of the crisis, with left-wing parties benefiting of higher policy congruence with their voters.
Since lower figures for centrism mean higher correspondence between parties' and their voters, the most useful way of looking at Table 3 is by identifying the negative differences between 2008 and 2012, meaning growing MPs-voters’ correspondence. Regarding an MP representing his party above all, the CDU exhibits the higher negative difference, meaning an increase in MP-voter correspondence. The CDS/PP also shows a negative difference; the remaining party differences are close to zero or positive, such as the case for PSD. This means that the decrease in support for this MP’s role (seen in the previous table) does not translate for PSD to a better correspondence with voters in 2012.

A general increase in congruence occurs in what concerns an MP representing his constituency above all in 2012. This is probably due to the higher decrease of MPs agreement towards this idea, which puts them closer to their voters. The assumption about an MP representing the population or his district/region above all has generated mostly very low differences, mainly due to the decline in MPs’ agreement.

The two remaining indicators, regarding parliament debates and groups of citizens running for MPs, show either negative differences, or low values for centrism. This means that either MPs or voters were already close to the party in 2008, or they moved closer in 2012.

The centrism totals by party and year reiterate the previous findings: an unexpected general trend for increasing correspondence regarding representation issues. BE confirms that it is the most congruent party in both years. Since the issues of representation are at the core of left-libertarian parties, as is the case for BE, this might help explain why this is the most consonant party. Supporting previous research points towards a tendency to a slightly higher level of congruence in catch-all parties (although depending on the issue) compared with the most ideological parties (Belchior, 2013). PS and PSD present lower levels of centrism than CDU or CDS/PP, which are among the most incongruent parties, but perform better in 2012. In general,
the changes in congruence have occurred in a different direction than expected: MPs-voters correspondence has indeed increased in 2012.

Centrism also reiterates the conclusions on the differences between representation and policy issues. Regarding the latter: congruence has increased for left-wing parties, usually more prone to defend redistribution and social protection policies (that voters are in 2012 more supportive), and decreased for the parties in government, the ones in charge of implementing the austerity measures. One note that deserves to be highlighted is that by using centrism the growing of incongruence in CDS is clarified: the party was the most correspondent to their voters in 2008 concerning these policies and becomes the least in 2012.

It is not possible to isolate the effect of the economic crisis on the levels of congruence obtained on representation issues, but we find it very plausible that the crisis and its political and social effects had contributed significantly to this change, especially because the increase in the levels of MPs-voters' correspondence does not seem to be only the result of a change in voters' views but also (if not mainly) the result of a change in MPs positions towards more participatory forms of representation. The crisis also seem to have played a role concerning policies issues: only left-wing parties (the ones that are not in government) have seen congruence with their voters increase in 2012.

In pursuit of our final goal to assess the importance of voters' visions of representation on congruence before and after the crisis, we ran a regression model on the pooled dataset of the studies in 2008 and 2012 (displayed in Table 4). The dependent variable is the squared difference of the voter's position regarding the mean position of MPs in the party (corresponding to Achen's proximity: 1978), for each of the six representation issues involved. Lower values in the dependent variables mean an increase in congruence. Besides the participatory-mandatory versus institutional-independent visions of representation, the independent variables are: evaluation of the economy, media exposure and party identification.

To measure the relevance of voters' positioning in the participatory-mandatory versus institutional-independent visions, an additive index was built using two variables measuring voters' position regarding the following statements: 'parties are the main link between the
citizens and the state’ and ‘citizens have ample opportunity to participate in political decisions’ (1=completely disagree; 5= completely agree).

Since the aim is to explore the importance of the crisis in the evaluations of representation (as the literature suggests: Schmidt, 2009; Lefkofridi et al., 2012), voters’ evaluation of the state of the economy in the country is used as an individual proxy to assess the relevance of the crisis. Media exposure is used as a measurement of political information, since the more informed voters are potentially more likely to be in line with their parties’ views on representation (for a literature revision see: Belchior, 2013: 355-356, 358). A year dummy was also included, as well as interaction terms between the year dummy and the main independent variables to detect possible changes on the impact of our independent variables at a time when the crisis was at its peak. Party dummies are also included as independent variables since the type of party has been proven to be of relevance in other research (Belchior, 2013).

(Tables 4. HERE)

There appears to be a strong main effect of having a participatory-mandatory view of representation with lack of congruence. This is what best explains distance between MPs and voters within parties (note that the negative signs of the coefficients indicate an increase in MP-voter correspondence) and there is no significant impact of the change in time in this relationship. One possible explanation is that voters who tend to adopt the institutional-independent vision of representation are more likely to mirror the representatives’ own evaluation of the representation process. The coefficients are not robust, but in every analysis having a more institutional perspective over representation, in which political parties are considered the main link between government and voters, is associated with an increase in MPs-voters correspondence.

Evaluation of the state of the economy in Portugal does not produce significant main effects on congruence, but the change in time seems to have an effect on the impact of economic evaluations. Negative appreciations are related to lower correspondence when it comes to the
view that MPs represent constituents above all and positive appreciations seem to decrease congruence on the question of the right of individual citizens to run as independents. Similarly, media exposure does not produce any significant main effects on congruence with the exception of the increase in incongruence on views about the right of citizens to present lists of candidates. As expected, media exposure appears to increase congruence on the questions of whom the party represents (their party or their constituents above all) as we move from 2008 to 2012.

Final Considerations

Using surveys for both Portuguese MPs and citizens in two moments in time - 2008 and 2012 - the present article aimed to explore how the Portuguese MP’s and voters view and assess the legislators' roles and the representation process, before and after the economic crisis. Conclusions on the effect of the crisis are problematic since the available data strictly reports to these two moments in time, and one case study. However, the present results provide an original insight of what might be at stake regarding the effects of an economic crisis in representation views and performance that can work as a benchmark for future research.

Findings suggest that a change in the patterns of representation not only among voters, but also among MPs, as occurred between 2008 and 2012. One of the main findings of the paper is that, against expectations, after the crisis MP-voter congruence reveals a tendency towards increasing for issues of representation. This is partially due to the apparent move of Portuguese MPs away from the 'institutional-independent' towards a more 'participatory-mandatory' vision of representation (although to a lesser extent and still far away from voters). The citizenry has moved away from traditional and conventional understandings of representation and towards the 'participatory' vision of democracy, reiterating a tendency that was already visible in 2008. However, this reports to what they think representation should be, but not what it actually was in 2012. Voters wish to see groups of independent citizens running for parliamentary office, but they acknowledge that the decision-making process does not actually take into account the constituencies. Although the trend is towards higher correspondence, voters across parties tend to see MPs as representing more their own parties and less their constituencies when compared
with MPs. The analysis of two policy issues – income and wealth redistribution and maintenance of social protection levels – precisely proves that split-up between voters and MPs of government parties, the ones that have seen their correspondence with voters decrease. Finally, voters' views on the patterns of representation seem to be of significance when explaining the levels of congruence achieved. Even though the gap between voters and MPs has closed somewhat between 2008 and 2012 due to the move of MPs towards more ‘participatory’ visions of representation (perhaps responding to increased criticism on the part of the electorate), for voters at the individual level, the adoption of views closer to the ‘institutional’ pole of the continuum better explains MP-voter congruence. However, given the movement of MPs – possibly, at least in part, due to the economic crisis and crisis of confidence towards political institutions – this relationship may start heading the other way if MPs continue to move towards the direction of voters and adopt a more participatory vision of the political representation process.

Since this research was based in a single case study, and also because it has followed a rather uncommon approach, the replication of its findings using other cases is particularly welcome in order to validate the conclusions. Although the research mobilized a large amount of data mostly reporting to two moments in time, the fact is that any generalization of the findings is very risky. Other case studies will be welcome to validate the present results.

1 The sample of MPs per party in 2008 was (in parenthesis the number of MPs in Parliament): BE 4 (8); CDS-PP 8 (12); CDU 8 (14); PSD 45 (75), and PS 76 (121). In 2012/13 the sample of MPs per party was: BE 4 (8); CDS-PP 13 (24); CDU 9 (16); PSD 58 (108), and PS 39 (74).

2 The test of means report to the following hypotheses: the mean of the variables is equal in both years: $H_0: \mu_{2008} = \mu_{2012}$, or the mean of the variables is different when comparing 2008 and 2012: $H_1: \mu_{2008} \neq \mu_{2012}$. t test results are as follows, in the order of Figure 1: $t(2496,852)=14,676$; $t(2387,550)=8,363$; $t(2456,932)=5,232$; $t(2270,056)=9,193$; $t(2321,725)=-8,282$; $t(2341,438)=-10,667$; $t(2286,694)=12,734$; $t(2329,657)=11,994$; and $t(2099,277)=1,621$. Only this last one is not significant.

3 The t test results of mean differences are as follows, in the order of the Figures: For voters: $t(2338,436)=0,707$; $t(2376,602)=4,684$; $t(2303,924)=3,173$; $t(2337,315)=5,088$; $t(2329,657)=11,994$; and $t(2099,277)=1,621$. All tests are
statistically significant, except the penultimate. For MPs: \( t(191,068)=7.224; t(258,739)=-0.576; t(254,350)=2.858; \)
\( t(223,915)=4.541; t(242,661)=-0.0292; \) and \( t(236,284)=0.950. \) The first and fourth indicators are not significant.

\( ^{iv} \) The link to a party is done by using party list for MPs and party identification for voters.

\( ^{v} \) The questions for voters, in 2008 and 2012, were: "What do you think of the state of the economy in Portugal? Would you say the state of the economy is" (five point scale: from very good to very bad); and a composite index of "How often do you follow politics in media? How often do you follow politics in the news, on television, radio, daily papers, or on the internet?" (scale: 'every day', 'several times a week', 'once or twice a week', 'less often', 'never').
References


Figure 1. Portuguese citizens’ evaluations of the political system before and after the crisis (mean values)

Table 1. Importance of the legislative’s roles by MEPs (mean values)

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<td>All people in the country</td>
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Notes: The question is for both years: “How important is it to you to represent the following groups of people in the European Parliament?” (scale: 1=of little importance; 7=of great importance).

Figure 2. Portuguese voters and MPs agreement with the statements: “An MP represents above all…” (completely agree + agree)

Figure 3. Portuguese voters’ and MPs agreement with the following measures (completely agree + agree)

Figure 4. Spanish citizens’ evaluation of how much MPs take into account different groups in policy decision-making, 2005 (very much + much)


Figure 5. Spanish voters’ perceptions of who MPs represent above all (2005-2012)

### Table 2. Representation patterns and issue congruence: percentages and percentage distances across parties' MPs and voters between 2008-2012

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<th>BE MPs</th>
<th>BE Diff</th>
<th>CDU Voters</th>
<th>CDU MPs</th>
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Notes: Figures are the percentage of respondents who agreed ('agree' plus 'completely agree') with the proposition, by party identification (voters) and party list (MPs), and the absolute percentage distances between them (shaded). Scales - four: 1 - 'completely disagree'; 4 or 5 - 'completely agree' (the first four variables are 5 points-scale, and the remaining two variables are 4 points-scale). N 2008 voters: BE=38; CDU=18; CDU=80; PS=334; PSD=272. N 2012 voters: BE=73; CDU=20; CDU=94; PS=274; PSD=146. N 2008 MPs: BE=14; CDU=8; CDU=7-9; PS=76-88; PSD=17-45. N 2012 MPs: BE=8; CDU=16; CDU=10; PS=36; PSD=53. Sources: Portuguese Citizens Surveys, 2008, 2012; and Portuguese MPs surveys, 2008, 2012/13.
Table 3. Representation patterns and issue congruence: centrisim across parties' MPs and voters between 2008 and 2012

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<th>CDS/PP</th>
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**An MP represents his constituents above all**

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**An MP represents the population above all**

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**An MP represents his party above all**

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**Groups of independent citizens should be able to present lists of candidates to run for MP**

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**The debates in Parliament contribute to the enlightenment of the citizens**

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**Centrism sum**

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**Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people**

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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if that means an increase of the taxes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>diff.</th>
<th>-0.32</th>
<th>-0.78</th>
<th>-0.64</th>
<th>-0.28</th>
<th>3.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes and sources: See previous table.
Table 4. Representation patterns: an explicative model (OLS regressions, method enter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>An MP represents his party above all</th>
<th>An MP represents the population above all</th>
<th>An MP represents his constituents above all</th>
<th>The debates in Parliament contribute to the enlightenment of the citizens</th>
<th>Groups of independent citizens should be able to present lists of candidates to run for MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participatory-mandatory versus institutional-independent vision</td>
<td>-0.087(0.036)*</td>
<td>-0.224(0.072)**</td>
<td>-0.268(0.052)**</td>
<td>-0.087(0.024)**</td>
<td>-0.115(0.038)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory-institutional vision*dummy2012</td>
<td>0.099(0.051)</td>
<td>-0.027(0.102)</td>
<td>0.166(0.073)*</td>
<td>0.022(0.033)</td>
<td>-0.002(0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of economy</td>
<td>-0.033(0.057)†</td>
<td>0.001(0.113)</td>
<td>0.047(0.081)</td>
<td>-0.049(0.038)</td>
<td>-0.084(0.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of economy*dummy2012</td>
<td>0.144(0.101)</td>
<td>-0.245(0.203)</td>
<td>-0.240(0.146)†</td>
<td>0.029(0.066)</td>
<td>0.260(0.105)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Exposure</td>
<td>0.007(0.013)</td>
<td>0.021(0.027)</td>
<td>0.036(0.019)</td>
<td>-0.002(0.009)</td>
<td>0.024(0.015)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Exposure*dummy2012</td>
<td>-0.035(0.020)†</td>
<td>0.026(0.041)</td>
<td>-0.022(0.029)†</td>
<td>0.003(0.013)</td>
<td>-0.027(0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy 2012</td>
<td>-0.214(0.413)</td>
<td>0.271(0.831)</td>
<td>-0.771(0.593)</td>
<td>-0.263(0.271)</td>
<td>-0.370(0.430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy BE</td>
<td>-0.006(0.145)</td>
<td>-0.380(0.292)</td>
<td>-0.034(0.209)</td>
<td>0.202(0.095)*</td>
<td>-0.745(0.150)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy CDS/PP</td>
<td>0.157(0.236)</td>
<td>0.595(0.475)</td>
<td>0.411(0.340)</td>
<td>0.083(0.157)</td>
<td>0.982(0.240)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy CDU</td>
<td>0.370(0.118)**</td>
<td>-0.269(0.239)</td>
<td>-0.165(0.171)</td>
<td>0.219(0.079)</td>
<td>1.896(0.124)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy PSD</td>
<td>0.087(0.089)</td>
<td>0.022(0.180)†</td>
<td>0.456(0.128)**</td>
<td>0.108(0.059)†</td>
<td>-0.229(0.096)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R2 | 1.4% | 2.0% | 4.5% | 2.3% | 24.5%

Note: Coefficients are Beta. N= 1183-1322. †p<0.1, *p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Standard errors in parentheses.