Individual Resources and Constituency Work
Styles among French MPs

Corentin Poyet
Centre Emile Durkheim, Institut d’études politiques de Bordeaux, Université de Bordeaux

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Summary:
In many countries, constituency work is considered by MPs as well as by scholars as a complete part of the parliamentary mandate. In other words, organizing activities at the local level is considered as a part of MPs role. Previous investigations pointed institutional incentives which constrain MPs to represent the interests of constituency in the Parliament and to work in their constituency. One of the most powerful factor is the electoral system which constrain, or not, MPs to cultivate their personal reputation in opposition to party reputation in order to achieve their goals and mainly to be reelected. The question we ask here is not why do MPs organize activities at the local level but how this strategy is concretely implemented and which differences can be drawn among MPs? We started our argumentation by accepting the strategic approach of roles proposed by Strøm (2012). This approach argues that individuals (here MPs) adapt their behavior to achieve their goals (here political offices). In other words, MPs develop a strategy which allows them to achieve their political goals. Strategies are routines that are continually recreated by MPs and recognized as the better mean to achieve a particular goal in a particular situation. We argue that the activities organized by MPs depend, thus, on their own resources and regarding what they have and what they lack, they will oriented themselves toward a certain type of activity. According to the theoretical approach, we argue that MPs will organize activities that will allow them to achieve their objectives regarding to what they already have in terms of resources. Our result are rather in line with our theoretical expectations: MPs with low resources will be more interested in personal and direct contacts with citizens through office hours while MPs with high resources will be more present at public and semi-public events. MPs with high national resources namely those with actual or past responsibilities in Parliament will be more interested in political events. Thank to these results, we created a new typology of district work based on individual resources of MPs. We make a distinction between five types of MPs: the Parliament man, the delegator, the worthy, the constituency member and the learner. These ideal types are distinguished regarding their resources, their ambitions which lead to a particular district work.
Introduction

Why MPs are interested in district work and is constituency work a homogeneous activity? These interrogations are not newcomers; the literature has been interested in for long time especially in the United-States, following Fenno (1978) seminal study. Before contextualizing these questions in the French political and constitutional spaces, it is important to begin the discussion by some global considerations about MPs’ role.

The question of MPs’ activities, in constituency or in the house is strongly linked to the question of the expectations “we” have about the behavior of an individual in a particular position. This assertion introduces the notion of role, concept strongly implanted in the field of legislative studies for last decades.

Functionalist tradition is the first conception which inspired legislatives studies precursors and mainly Wahlke et al. (1962) who map legislators’ norms of behavior. In the terms of Wahlke et al. (1962 : 22), roles are combination of personal characteristics and ecological characteristics of political units. The famous distinction between the style and the focus of representation and, thereafter the internal divisions within these concepts continue to be used in order to explain MPs’ representative roles in various countries as well as in comparative perspective. If this conceptualization remains one of the most powerful theoretical tools for understanding MPs’ attitudes, there is, in our view a problem for which literature do not give an answer namely the link between role and behavior. Is behavior influenced only by roles? Is role a behavioral ideal? In terms of behavior, what are the differences between a trustee and a delegate?

More important for our purpose is the motivational approach introduced, in legislative studies, by Searing (1994). The principal argument of this approach is to place MPs’ views of their roles in the center of the investigations. What Searing (1994) studies are the purposive roles namely the roles as they are defined by actors (here, MPs). Behaviors are understood as
the observable part of the role. In other words, in order to highlight the role, it is necessary to observe concrete behaviors. The argument of Searing (1994) is that MPs choose the role which fits their preferences. Hence, MPs who like contact with citizens will choose a role of constituency member, for example. In this approach, the incentive is emotional; this means that MPs choose their role because it fits their psychological expectations. This approach is the starting point of our study although we do not agree with some arguments. More precisely, we will follow a rational choice adaptation of this approach namely the strategic approach of roles theorized by Strøm (2012).

The application of roles theories in France is not well developed due to structural constraints as argued by Costa and Kerrouche (2009). They claim that a strict application of motivational approach is not adapted due to the dichotomy between the national level and the local level. Hence, the typology developed by Searing (1994) cannot be implemented in France despite the argument of Blomgren and Rozenberg (2012) about the universality of this categorization. In order to adapt this typology to the French case, Costa and Kerrouche (2009) argue that the French MP mandate is dual: national and local and that MPs play two roles, one at each level. If we do not criticize the duality of the French parliamentary mandate, we disagree about the duality of roles. In our view, the duality of the mandate is two faces of the same coin: a role prescribes norms of behavior at each level. In other words, it is possible to create a typology of role which takes this specificity into account and we argue that the strategic approach is well adapted.

One concept structures the legislative studies in France namely the concept of eligibility Costa and Kerrouche (2007: 13) define it as a combination of social and structural factors allowing an individual, in a given political context, to be reelected or to achieve a progressive objective in democratic competition. Further, they argue that this eligibility is won at the national level as well as the local level and that the majority of MPs are invited to
work at the local level in order to maintain their own reputation. In the French context, the local behavior is, thus, an important dimension of MPs’ behaviors and, as argued by Fenno (1978) has to be taken into account in order to understand MPs’ role. As introduced above, our purpose, in this paper is to investigate the different styles of MPs local behavior and the reasons why MPs develop one role rather than another. Constituency work will be used as indicators of these roles. Our argument is that MPs are driven by their preferences in terms of political mandate. Constituency work is a strategy developed (or followed) in order to achieve their goals and principally the reelection and the pursuit of a local mandate but not only. Concrete district work will depend, hence, on what MPs have in hands and on what they need to do in order to achieve their goals. Our aim is to show, given an objective and a particular situation, how a MP organizes his constituency work. This paper is the first to analyze district work by taken into account the strategic approach of roles which is particularly adapted to the French context for multiple reason: First, as said before, structural specificities of France political space give difficulties to apply the other approaches. The strategic approach takes into account the institutional framework in the definition of the strategy and MPs will develop their own role considering the context in which they operate. Second, the French institutional framework gives incentives to MPs to orientate a part of their behavior at the local level. As implied by Costa and Kerrouche (2007), constituency work is a way to achieve political goals. This means that constituency work is a strategy for itself (Dolezal and Müller 2001) but what we expect is that this strategy is not homogeneous as illustrated in the Austrian case for example (Dolezal and Müller 2001). These authors initiate an explanation of differences between MPs but do not categorize these differences. They show which factors influence which kind of activities and their analyses invite us to develop the analyses by investigating the local strategies more in details. How MPs organize their work in constituency?
The interest of this study is double: first, it leads to a better knowledge of MPs' constituency work and of the differences existing between MPs not only in France but also in Europe by introducing a new typology of roles based on the observation of district work. Not only scholars but also French MPs highlighted the important place given to constituency work despite the Jacobeian tradition. However, this apparent contradiction, and mainly its empirical characteristics, is not well documented. Second, our study introduces a new application of the strategic approach of legislative roles. If roles are central in the field of legislative studies two approaches dominate the literature: functionalist (Wahlke et al. 1962) and motivational (Searing 1994). In the contrary, the strategic approach stays rather unknown and less cited by authors even if we assist an increasing number of publications follow this theoretical approach (Jenny and Müller 2012; Müller et al. 2001; Russo 2011; Zittel 2012). It is interesting to note that several aspects of parliamentary work were investigated through the strategically scope from constituency orientation in parliamentary questions (Russo 2011) to electoral campaigns (Zittel 2012). Thus, we will contribute to the development of this approach by adapting it to a new case of study.

The strategic approach of legislative roles

As argued by Zittel (2012: 105), this approach is a development of the motivational approach taken into account a critic addressed to this approach namely the absence of differentiation between preferences and role. If roles are influenced by preferences, they do not constitute the roles. Here, roles are considered as “behavioral strategies driven by the goals of politicians” (Strøm 2012: 87). The author adds that “roles are routinized strategies, driven by reasons (preferences) and constrained by rules (institutions).” In this approach preferences are exogenous political goals. The strategy reflects the different resources allocation decided by MPs and which leads him to his goal. Hence, the strategy is defined by
the use of scare resource namely time, money and human resources. The strategies are considered as routines because they are indefinitely recreate by MPs who learn the “best way” to achieve their goals given an institutional framework. In that sense, MPs do not recreate errors of the past and take the institutional change into account in a process of strategy adaptation. In accord with Strøm (2012), this definition of the role follows the motivational conception namely the vision of MPs on their own role: MPs are handler of their role.

According to the perspective adopted in this paper the variability in the behaviors of representatives can be understood by considering that parliamentarians have different objectives and operate under different conditions. If we agree with this assumption, it is important to add last dimension namely social resources. In his theoretical paper, Strøm (2012) do not discuss of them but we consider they have to be taken into account. Not all MPs are on an equal footing due to their past political or professional career as well as accumulation of mandates or personal factors. It is also a question of actual resources: some resources can appear during their mandate, for example, thanks to an office in the Parliament or in the parliamentary group. In our view these resources have to be taken into account because they frame MPs behavior as we will hypothesize thereafter.

The local strategy is thus dependent of three dimensions: individual preferences\(^1\), institutional constraints and opportunities and finally social resources. The combination of these dimensions determines the allocation of material resources (time, human, money) and, therefore, the strategy. In this paper we are mainly interested in the last dimension we consider as the most important for explaining district work. The selected strategy will constitute the indicator of the parliamentary role as argued by Strøm (2012). MPs looking for a reelection having great social resources will not develop the same strategy than a MP without these social resources. For example at the local level, A MP, former or actual mayor,

\[^1\] Strøm (2012) suggests that parliamentarians may have an ordered set of preferences: being re-selected, re-elected, acquiring party and legislative offices.
will not develop the same strategy than a MP for who it is his first mandate even if they have
the same objective. In that sense, their roles, observed through constituency work, will not be
the same. We can imagine a MP with another local mandate (mayor of the main city of the
district): His time will be limited by his second mandate and he will have to develop a
strategy which takes this point into account. On one hand, we can hypothesize he will have
more political capital than a first elected MP, but on the other hand, he will have less time.
Local strategies will, hence, be different between these MPs. These artificial examples
illustrate the effect of preferences which do not constitute the roles but only an objective. The
role is what MPs do to achieve this objective, how the resources are allocated.

**MPs strategies observed at the local level: theoretical expectations**

The local dimension of MPs behavior is not a new topic for political scientists. However, in France, if scholars have highlighted the importance given by MPs to the
constituency work and enunciated the reasons why, the differences between MPs in terms of
local activities are not well known and only hypotheses are proposed or this question is
indirectly asked through, for example, the *cumul des mandats*. Many scholars have explained
how constituency work or constituency representation can be used strategically by MPs in
order to achieve their goal. In the Italian case, Russo (2011) argues that constituency
orientation in parliamentary questions is used by MPs with low resources at the national level.
In addition, in Austria, Dolezal and Müller (2001) illustrates that the choice of activities in
constituency mainly depends on the position in the Parliament. The explanation given by
Dolezal and Müller (2001) is the same than Russo (2011) namely the social resources at the
national level and the allocation of resources in the sense of Strøm (2012). These behaviors
are not constitutionally tasks and the reverse is the case. In France, Jacobean tradition implies
MPs to represent general interest instead of specific interests like constituency. However, the
reality overtakes the theory and district work is a common behavior in France as well as in other democratic countries. In France, scholars highlighted the impact of electoral system which enhances the presence of personal vote (Costa and Kerrouche 2007). This means that personal reputation of a politician based on his concrete actions instead of his ideology of partisan affiliation. Constituency orientation in Parliament or district work is a mean to cultivate personal reputation used by MPs with low social resources at the national level. As argued by Fenno (1978), reelection is one of the most powerful incentives to explain constituency work and the culture of personal reputation constitutes the factor explaining why MPs engage themselves in district work.

What we propose in this paper is to apply the strategic approach of roles by analyzing constituency work among French MPs. Our aim is to look at the activities and district work organization in order to explain how this strategy is applied and the differences between MPs. It is well accepted in literature that different home styles coexist among MPs (Parker and Goodman 2009) but it is less clear how these strategies are implied, on which bases. Our final intention is to propose an innovative typology of MPs roles. The combination and a game of substitution between the resources will define the different routines followed by MPs when they are in their district and, hence, the allocation of scare resources. Past roles’ typologies were not constructed with dimensions and roles are not differentiate on the same bases. In our view, in order to enhance the understanding of the roles, they have to be distinguished on the same factors which are more than individual preferences or emotional benefit.

The first step is the discussion of the allocation of individual social resources, the game of substitution which is reflected in the activities initiated by MPs. At the end of this process, we will be able to propose a typology based on empirical results. The first point
concerns MPs with low social resources namely those who cannot count on social and political capital or if MP’s network cannot be activated for different reasons. As argued by Le Lidec (2008) these social resources are important in order to rationalize the activities in district and mainly to accelerate the transfer of information between MPs and other authorities or MPs and citizens. Without these resources, MPs can be blocked and have to compensate this lack with human resources but also with activities which lead to a development or/and a consolidation of these resources. These resources are in different levels, local and national and, as argued by Russo (2011), a lack of national resources will enhance the incentives to organize local activities. At the local level, they acquire resources thank to their past career but also during their mandate. We argue that past career is more important than the current and junior MPs without preceding local political mandate are expected to have less local resources or they are compensated by professional experience. In presence of a static ambition (reelection), compensate this lack would be important and especially in the context of France where personal reputation is important because of the electoral rules. Hence, we can expect (H1a) the less national (and local) social resources has a MP, the more diversified will be his contacts and will mainly favor office hours. The diversity has to be understood not only in terms of kind of activity but also in terms of people met or kind of participation.

As argued by Le Lidec (2008) collaborators in district are a cornerstone of MPs district work. They have a median position between the citizens and the MP and have to deal with these two principals. On one hand, citizens look for a helping hand and for whom it is uneasy to answer when social resources are not available. On the second hand, the MP has to show that despite of this lack he is able to “take care” of the citizens. Here, we can also invoke the question of reputation. Hence, collaborators will be involved in this game of compensation: we expect that (H1b) MPs with low social resources at national level will

2 An artificial illustration can be a change of majority in a municipal council which can lead to a loss of available contacts.
3 The assertion of low local resources does not mean an absence of resources.
enroll generalist collaborators. According to Le Lidec (2008), collaborators characteristics can follow two patterns: specialists or generalists. The first pattern concerns MPs with high social resources at the national as well as the local level. In constituency, MPs will recruit different profiles and mainly communication experts who, today, have great control of social networks and can used them as a strong mean of communication but also specialists of issues which characterize the constituency. On the other hand, MPs with low social resources will not invest all their resources for the recruitment of collaborators in order to compensate the lack of resource by investing them in a generalist constituency work. Hence, their collaborators will be more generalist in terms of competences. These hypotheses were developed in a case of static ambition, namely the reelection. We argue that their political individual preferences are ordered as illustrated by Strøm (2012). These MPs, because their reelection is not easy will not spend time to achieve other goals. However a local objective (municipality for example) can be an objective targeted by MPs and in absence of social resources we expect that the behavior will follow the same pattern.

By understanding roles in terms of dimensions, we can argue that opposite patterns are present through MPs and that they constitute other roles. Some MPs have low national resources but high local resources. In terms of collaborators, \((H2a)\) high level of social resources leads to a recruitment of specialists. The argument behind this assertion is that these MPs have to value their experience. The question of behavior in constituency and type of activities is more complex than the opposite hypothesis. In other words, we do not expect that MPs with high social resources at the local level will initiate less diversified activities or not at all. If we stay with MPs looking for reelection we can expect the two opposite pattern depending on their career and mainly on offices occupied by MPs during his career. The media exposure or the reputation of certain office differs not only at the local level but also at
the national or supranational level. In other words, we have to do a difference between MPs with predominant career and those with a more “backbencher” career. Past or present mayors, for example, were or are at the forefront of the political life. They maintain public contact with other politicians as well as with citizens. Several surveys show that citizens are rather close of their mayor or, at least, know who he is. Other offices can also lead to the creation of an address book but the holders of these offices are less on the front of political life. MPs firstly elected in local or regional legislative organizations (Conseils municipaux, Conseils Généraux, Conseils Régionaux) and without responsibilities are concerned by this assertion. Their career offers them political resources, an expertise which can be recognized by citizen but the links with them are less preponderant. Hence we have the following expectation: 

\[(H2b): \text{MPs with career on the front line will develop fewer diverse contacts in favor of public event. MPs with career in local and regional parliaments will follow the opposite pattern.}\]

**Methodological framework**

Two kinds of data will be used: first, we will base our empirical analyses on qualitative interview with about fifty French MPs collected thank to the CITREP project. These interviews contain information about MPs’ vision of their constituency work and principally for us: activities, duration of the constituency work but also the function devoted to the collaborator and data about career, past and future. These interviews were conducted between May 2011 and May 2013 normally in districts after or during the observation although one interview was conducted two weeks later in Paris, at the Assemblée Nationale. The vast majority of interview took place in a closed space (office or car) but some others were conducted in public space and we can expect that these conditions influence the interview.
As implied above, these interviews were linked to a second kind of date namely observations of MPs activities in district. The observation lasted two consecutive days per MP although some observation lasted only one day due to specific circumstances but these cases are rather rare namely three MPs on fifty. Each activity is detailed in a standardized book and a report of the two days is written by the investigator. Each source is important for this paper because activities allow us to illustrate the strategy and the report gives a lot of information which cannot be transcribed in the book and mainly the discussion between the MP and his collaborator or the investigator.

Data about the career come from the official website of the Assemblée Nationale as well as from the own website of MPs when available. Actually, we have data about the political and professional career of the majority of MPs and, more important, for all MPs of the sample.

In order to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees, we gave a number to each MP corresponding to the order of appearance. Thus, we gave the number one to the first observed MP. In addition, information which can lead to an identification of MPs is also anonymized; it concerns geographical names (cities, constituencies, etc.) but also people (collaborators, others politicians, etc.) as well as firms, associations, etc.

Constituency work among French MPs: empirical results

We will start our empirical discussion by looking at the use of the collaborators’ credit namely the profile of MPs’ assistant.

Collaborators in constituency: specialists or generalists?

We argued before that MPs with low social resources will recruit generalist collaborators in order to implement a strategy of open doors. The goal is to give an answer to
a maximum of demand coming from citizens or industries. The same pattern is present for MPs with social resources but with a political career as backbencher. In the contrary, we expect that MPs with high social resources, at least at the national level, will recruit specialized collaborators.

Interviews and observation give some evidence for this argument but results are more contrasted than expected. For MPs looking for a reelection, as argued before, low national resources are a strong incentive for a recruitment of generalist collaborators with some restrictions. In the contrary, high national resources lead to a recruitment of specialist MPs.

“Each one is on a specific topic. One is more on rural issues, the second is more oriented toward the communication, and the third manages the agenda.” [MP n°49, woman, EELV, high national resources, CITREP interview].

The MP has four collaborators and three in constituency. [...]. In constituency, the first one manages the agenda and hosts the citizens. The second is a communication expert and mainly on social network. The third takes pictures of MPs during the events which she participates. [MP n°36, woman, UMP, increasing national resources, CITREP observation].

“I try to associate my collaborator in constituency [in the legislative work] because I know she is interested in.” [MP n°48, woman, EELV, low national resources, CITREP interview]

The MP has an office in the biggest city of the district where one collaborator manages the MP’s life in constituency [MP n°37, man, app-SRC, low national resources, CITREP observation].

In constituency office, the first collaborator manages the agenda and writes the discourses in constituency. He is also responsible for the communication [MP n°42, woman, SRC, low national resources, CITREP observation].

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4 This the first mandate for this MP but she works to increases her social resources. During the observation, she discussed about an appointment with the president of the MEDEF and has several appointments with party leaders in Paris as well as invitation in constituency.
The profile of collaborators can be uneasy to explain when MPs have several mandates: “I think about my personal assistant, […] my municipally staff who does not care about my work of MP. However, when the problems concern the city or the urban agglomeration, there is a dual role” [MP n° 40, man, UMP, low national resources, CITREP interview].

“In constituency, collaborators have a work which is divided with my mandate of president of the Conseil Général. When someone wants to meet you, we never know if he comes for the president of Conseil Général or for the MP [MP n°23, man, UMP, high national resources, CITREP interview].

In these cases, collaborators are specialists but it is due to the collusion between the two mandates the MP has. When MPs have a several mandates, and mainly an executive mandate, collaborators are specialized in one task which is transversal. At the local level, our observations show that MPs rationalize their recruitment: agenda is managed by one collaborator, communication by another, etc.

Low national resources do not lead automatically to a recruitment of generalist collaborators instead of specialist as illustrated by MP n°40. As argued by Le Lidec (2008), this process in moderated by the presence of local mandate and, thus, by local material resources relative to this mandate. Hence, more than national resources, the profile of collaborators will be firstly influenced by the local situation and mainly by the present and past career of MPs and, more precisely, by the type of office where MPs are or were elected. Regardless the level of social resources at the national level, MPs having an executive office at the local level are more inclined to recruit a team of specialized collaborators in order to establish bridges between the different mandates and respective resources which are linked to. MPs who do not have such an office, the recruitment will depend on the national resources.
As argued by Russo (2011), a lack of national resources will constrain MPs to have a strong focus on constituency. Because they do not have an executive office, some MPs have to compensate the lack by recruiting generalist collaborators in constituency as illustrate by MPs n°37 or 42 for example. In the contrary, MPs with high social resources (and an expertise for certain), the recruitment will be done by specialization as illustrated by MP n°49 who is president of a parliamentary committee and a past career at the front of the local political life.

The diversity of constituency work

As argued before, MPs’ behavior is not homogeny and local behavior does not constitute an exception in the hands of a minority of MPs. Different roles co-exist at the local level depending on what MPs expect and on his resources’ allocation.

Because behavior is the observable part of role, we will base our analyses on the concrete activities which MPs take part. MPs do not allocate their resources following the same pattern or, for paraphrasing Fenno (1978), there is not only one home style. Our argument is that behind the apparent “disorganization” of constituency work, patterns exist. These patterns of behaviors are the routines as theorized by Strøm (2012) and, thus, reflect the role MPs want to play.

Before explaining the different strategies, it is important to present constituency work as a whole and it is the purpose of table 1.
The table 1 is based on the observation of fifty MPs (336 events/activities) which has been categorized in eleven groups plus a 12th category which regroups all private activities and internal meeting between MPs and their collaborators. As argued by Schnatterer (2012), these results can be considered as representative of the work in constituency when no observers were with MPs although they told us that it is not possible to describe a “typical week.” The results show that constituency work is a mean for the MPs to show himself not only to citizens but also to other political units. The two most observed activities are in direct relation with citizens: surgeries and social events (political or not). Public or semi-public events are those which occupy MPs most times: about 53% of observed events can be categorized as it. It is also interesting to see that, in constituency, political party meetings or contacts with media are rather rare as well as contact with interests groups. The results show that constituency work is firstly connected to human relations. This question of contact with citizen as a characteristic of constituency work was previously documented by others scholars.
in other countries (Dolezal and Müller 2001; Fenno 1978). They highlighted the division of working between on one hand the legislative work in Parliament and, on the other hand, the human relations in constituency. This duality is also accepted by French MPs interviewed during the observation. Regardless their career, party or local situation, a large majority of MPs pointed this effect:

“Constituency work is, for me, the daily proximity.” [MP n°12, woman, SRC]

“The most important for me, is to be receptive to people I represent.” [MP n°18, man, UMP]

“I guess that constituency work is the office hours. I organize my work in contact with my compatriots.” [MP n°34, man, SRC]

“It [constituency work] is a work of territories’ animator. It is also listening people and local politicians.” [MP n°40, man, UMP]

As a whole, constituency work is very diverse in terms of activities and if certain are more popular than others, it is not possible to say if it is a homogeneous work or not. The range of activities is large but this table does not tell us anything about the behavior of individual MPs. We argued before that MPs strategically follow routines which allow them to achieve their goals. Our hypotheses were that MPs with low social resources (local and national) will not follow a pattern of homogeneous behavior but will diversify their activities and will be incline to organize surgeries. MPs with high local resources will be divided in two groups: those who have/had a career in the front line of politics (mayors, regional executive powers) and those who are/were less publicly exposed (local and regional legislative). We hypothesized that the first group will have less diversified activities in profit of public events while the second group will follow the opposite pattern.
In this paper the social resources will be operationalized by looking at the career of MP and the held offices. At the national level, the social resources will be operationalized through the different position available in the Parliament. It corresponds to the legislative offices or party offices understood in a global definition proposed by Strøm (2012). This means that MPs with high social resources at the national level will be those who are President of a party group/committees/Parliament but also President of procedures linked to the parliamentary control (mission d’information, commission d’enquête) and executive offices. It also concerns MPs who have office in the national party administration. More than the position itself, it is the meaning associate to it. These positions offer a visibility to MPs but also recognition about their work. By holding one or several of them, MPs can assure his eligibility. Hence, at the local level they will not follow the same routines than other MPs and, thus, will not play the same role. In addition, we also introduce the seniority as a social resource.

At the local level, the identification of resources follows the same pattern with a specification concerning the kind of position. As introduced above, we differentiate the frontbencher positions (executive offices at the local or regional level) from backbencher positions (legislative offices at the local or regional level). In addition, we add a factor relative to the political history of the constituency namely if it is a fief of the party of the actual elected MP or not. We consider a constituency as a fief if the party of the actual MP has won at least four of five last legislative elections. Our operationalization takes also into account the possibility for a MP to be elected in the fief of another party.

Naturally, local social resources are not only a question of political position but also, as explained by Costa and Kerrouche (2009), a question of professional experience or of notoriety. If we have data about a part of MPs, missing data are too numerous to expect solid results. However, political office can be considered as a proxy for other resources although it is incomplete.
Our investigation will be based on two levels of analyze: firstly we will analyze MPs district work by taken into account their activities and explain the characteristics of them. In other word, the unity of analyze will be the observed events. Secondly, we will slip down to the individual level in order to give more substance to our investigations.

The first analyzes taken into account the activities and the link between the type of events and the individual characteristics of MPs initiating the activities. Figure 2 and 3 are dedicated to the impact of *the cumul des mandats* namely one of our indicators of local resources. Figure 2 illustrate the dichotomy between activities done by MPs with one mandate and those done by MPs with at least two mandates at the local level.

![Figure 2: District work and local mandates](image)

Differences are not in terms of type of events but more in terms of intensity. Regardless the numbers of mandates of the MP, actor of the event, office hours is the most met type of events followed by social events. In terms of intensity, some differences can be raised: Social and political events are more popular among events done by MPs who
accumulate several mandates while office hour events follow the opposite pattern with a bigger difference.

When we look at the type of local mandate (figure 3), the findings are clearer.

![Figure 3: District work and type of local mandates](image)

Events characterized by having been done by MPs with an executive local mandate have more probabilities to be public and especially social events namely events without political connotation. On the other hand, office hours follow the opposite pattern namely that they are preferred by MPs with a legislative mandate. Ontologically, public events and office hours tell us different stories and are representative of different vision of parliamentary mandate. Office hours is linked to one vision of a MP’s role in constituency namely those of a MP in the service of the population, close to the social assistant. Following the strategic approach of role, we understand this behavior as a mean to compensate a lack of recognition. MP has to be known by his electorate; vulgarly speaking, to prove his value; and the word of mouth which is linked to office hours (Le Lidec 2008) seems to be the most used tool. On the other hand, MPs with high social resources are already well known by a large part of the electorate, regardless its opinion about them. Thus, public events (social or political) are chosen by these
MPs because it is a mean to be seen. This is another definition of the proximity with citizens a more top-down consideration; a MP who speaks about his work in Paris.

In order to confirm these results we compute a database at the individual level which is useful to calculate the time spend to one type of events instead another. For each observed MP, we calculate the time spent for each type of events relative to the total available time (24 or 48 hours). We consider that the time spent is more in line with the strategic approach of roles of Strøm (2012) who argues that the strategy is mainly the allocation of time. Our preceding results are partially confirmed in table 1.

For the first part, our calculations do not show precise differences between MPs cumulating mandates and the others. For the two groups, the time spent is shorter for office hours than for social events although the differences are small. This result is not in accord with our expectations for MPs without local mandates. However, when we look at the data, we note that this effect is due to one marginal MP who affects the mean. She participates to one social activity during several hours which is not representative of her constituency work. Marginal MPs are also present in the other category but with lower intensity. When we look at the type of mandate (second part of table 1), individual level results confirm the previous findings: MPs who have an executive office spend more time in public events. The mean for MPs with executive office is almost the double than this for MPs with a legislative office. The case of office hours is more precise and in complete accord with results obtained at the “events level.”

---

5 It was a six hours long event while the mean is close to one hour in our sample.
Table 1: Time spent for constituency work and local mandates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local mandate</th>
<th>Office hours</th>
<th>Social events</th>
<th>Political events</th>
<th>Party meeting</th>
<th>Meetings with media</th>
<th>Visits to clubs</th>
<th>Board meetings</th>
<th>Visits to local agencies</th>
<th>Visits to local entreprises</th>
<th>Meetings with interest group</th>
<th>Meeting with religious groups</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0,0327</td>
<td>0,0412</td>
<td>0,0292</td>
<td>0,0177</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0126</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,024</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0,012</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>0,03926</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0,04179</td>
<td>0,02181</td>
<td>0,02218</td>
<td>0,0205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0,0318</td>
<td>0,0378</td>
<td>0,0295</td>
<td>0,0049</td>
<td>0,008</td>
<td>0,0183</td>
<td>0,0121</td>
<td>0,0189</td>
<td>0,0058</td>
<td>0,0041</td>
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<td>0,0235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,03575</td>
<td>0,04277</td>
<td>0,0443</td>
<td>0,01854</td>
<td>0,01403</td>
<td>0,02681</td>
<td>0,0262</td>
<td>0,03094</td>
<td>0,0201</td>
<td>0,01554</td>
<td>0,01125</td>
<td>0,0309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Government Mean | 0,0191 | 0,0465 | 0,0237 | 0,0069 | 0,0032 | 0,019 | 0,0202 | 0,0171 | 0,0014 | 0,0072 | 0,0063 | 0,0271 |
| N             | 18           | 18            | 18               | 18            | 18                   | 18             | 18            | 18                       | 18                          | 18                          | 18                          |        |
| Std. Deviation | 0,02745      | 0,04778       | 0,04307          | 0,01384       | 0,00674              | 0,03342        | 0,03836       | 0,02013                  | 0,00499                     | 0,01617                     | 0,0176                      | 0,0327 |
| Legislative Mean | 0,046 | 0,028 | 0,036 | 0,0026 | 0,0135 | 0,0175 | 0,0029 | 0,0211 | 0,0107 | 0,0007 | 0        | 0,0194 |
| N             | 16           | 16            | 16               | 16            | 16                   | 16             | 16            | 16                       | 16                          | 16                          | 16                          |        |
| Std. Deviation | 0,03985      | 0,0368        | 0,0507           | 0,00807       | 0,021                | 0,02421        | 0,01172        | 0,03329                  | 0,02785                     | 0,0026                      | 0,0034                      |        |
| Total Mean | 0,0318       | 0,0378        | 0,0295           | 0,0049        | 0,008                | 0,0183         | 0,0121        | 0,0189                   | 0,0058                      | 0,0041                      | 0,0033                      | 0,0235 |
| N             | 34           | 34            | 34               | 34            | 34                   | 34             | 34            | 34                       | 34                          | 34                          | 34                          |        |
| Std. Deviation | 0,036        | 0,04335       | 0,04651          | 0,01154       | 0,01584              | 0,02903        | 0,02995        | 0,02677                  | 0,01969                     | 0,0122                      | 0,01302                     | 0,0337 |

Table 2: Constituency work and type of constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of district</th>
<th>Office hours</th>
<th>Social events</th>
<th>Political events</th>
<th>Party meeting</th>
<th>Meetings with media</th>
<th>Visits to clubs</th>
<th>Board meetings</th>
<th>Visits to local agencies</th>
<th>Visits to local entreprises</th>
<th>Meetings with interest group</th>
<th>Meeting with religious groups</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fief own party Mean</td>
<td>0,0262</td>
<td>0,0389</td>
<td>0,0148</td>
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<td>0,0125</td>
<td>0,0129</td>
<td>0,0196</td>
<td>0,0112</td>
<td>0,0079</td>
<td></td>
<td>0,00291</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,03265</td>
<td>0,0415</td>
<td>0,0306</td>
<td>0,01604</td>
<td>0,00519</td>
<td>0,02382</td>
<td>0,02933</td>
<td>0,02553</td>
<td>0,01664</td>
<td>0,00119</td>
<td></td>
<td>0,0398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fief opposing party Mean</td>
<td>0,0372</td>
<td>0,0385</td>
<td>0,0653</td>
<td>0,0226</td>
<td>0,0108</td>
<td>0,0042</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0514</td>
<td>0,0135</td>
<td>0,0118</td>
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<td>0,0319</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,03612</td>
<td>0,03525</td>
<td>0,06604</td>
<td>0,02832</td>
<td>0,02407</td>
<td>0,00932</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,06712</td>
<td>0,01254</td>
<td>0,0264</td>
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<td>0,0335</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive Mean</td>
<td>0,0425</td>
<td>0,0419</td>
<td>0,0334</td>
<td>0,0023</td>
<td>0,0095</td>
<td>0,0265</td>
<td>0,0092</td>
<td>0,0146</td>
<td>0,002</td>
<td>0,0041</td>
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<td>0,00102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,04014</td>
<td>0,05104</td>
<td>0,04966</td>
<td>0,00982</td>
<td>0,01775</td>
<td>0,03227</td>
<td>0,02909</td>
<td>0,01922</td>
<td>0,0054</td>
<td>0,01251</td>
<td>0,01766</td>
<td>0,0138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing Mean</td>
<td>0,0056</td>
<td>0,0234</td>
<td>0,0365</td>
<td>0,0208</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0091</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0169</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,00742</td>
<td>0,01779</td>
<td>0,01949</td>
<td>0,03507</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,01823</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,01997</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0169</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,0235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean</td>
<td>0,032</td>
<td>0,0387</td>
<td>0,0294</td>
<td>0,0082</td>
<td>0,0059</td>
<td>0,0168</td>
<td>0,0089</td>
<td>0,0203</td>
<td>0,0069</td>
<td>0,0062</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0,03575</td>
<td>0,04277</td>
<td>0,0443</td>
<td>0,01854</td>
<td>0,01403</td>
<td>0,02681</td>
<td>0,0262</td>
<td>0,03094</td>
<td>0,0201</td>
<td>0,01554</td>
<td>0,01125</td>
<td>0,0309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to have a complete panorama of the effect of local social resources, we also take into account the history of constituency. Our expectation about the process is that being elected in a fief is a resource that allows MPs to not have the same behavior than MPs elected in competitive district or fief of another party. Table 2 presents the time spent by MPs for each type of events\(^6\). Our expectations about the effect of resources are only partially validate by our calculations: MPs elected in a fief spend less time for office hours than other MPs. However, they do not spend more time than other for public events. When we look at the diversity of the activities, there is no clear pattern: MPs elected in a fief of the adversaries or in competitive districts have respectively five and four activities which take them the most time. On the other hand, MPs elected in a fief of their party have two main activities but, thereafter, a high chopped agenda. They engage themselves in more activities but spend less time for them. However, the fact is that MPs elected in competitive district or in fief of an adversary will spend more time in constituency than MPs elected in a fief. Their activities are more prolonged for more type of events. In other words, if we consider only activities with the highest duration, they are more diversified for MPs elected in competitive district or fief of an opposition party than for MPs elected in a fief. The effect of fief seems, thus, more a question of duration of the activities than of absolute diversity of events. Not being elected in a fief leads to give a strong importance (calculated in terms of time spent) to several type of activities (four of five) but, at the end, MPs elected in a fief have a more diversified constituency work with a strong point given to on one or two type of activities. Our conclusion is that this structural resource does not directly influence MPs’ role. Hence, we can expect that political color of MPs does not affect their role.

To summary our findings about the local social resources, it is important to point the effect of the *cumul des mandats*: in terms of district work, the differences between MPs with a

---

\(^6\) Analyses at the level of the events did not bring anything to our argument; the results being rather the same than at the individual level.
local mandate and those without, if they exist, are not so clear. More important is the type of mandate: MPs with an executive office at the local level spend more time for public events while MPs with a legislative office are more inclined to organize office hours. The effect of the political history of the district does not show a clear pattern: being elected in a fief allows MPs to not spend too many time for several activities. They do not organize less kind of activities but their presence is shorter in terms of duration. They give more importance in terms of duration for two types of activities when other MPs give importance to four or five activities.

The last analyses take into account the actual or past situation of MPs at the national level namely all what is related to their parliamentary mandate: seniority and responsibilities in the parliament or in the party group. At the level of activities (figures 4 and 5), results do not show any significant differences for these two factors. However, some results are interesting: 20% of the activities done by MPs with responsibilities are political events instead of 13% for MPs without responsibilities. The same pattern can be noted for visits to local
agencies. Seniority presents a different pattern and this resource has a different effect: our results show that first elected MPs are more oriented to meetings with local politicians. While the absence of local experience does not impact this type of activity, the opposite pattern is present for the experience at the national level. Our explanation is that new elected MPs have to present themselves at the local agencies. Two observations illustrate this assertion: the first MP (MP n°37) organizes, each month, a meeting with local officials in one *canton* composing his district. This plan has been implemented a couple of months after his election. We observed the second MP (MP n°1) during a “*cantonal tour*” in which he met local worthies (elected or not). It is important to note that these two MPs do not have the same political background at the local level. In addition, it seems that responsibilities and seniority do not work in favor of office hours.

![Figure 5: District works and national responsibilities](image)

- **Figure 5 : District works and national responsibilities**
- **No responsibilities (N=311)**
- **Responsabilities (N=25)**
When we look at the individual level and the average time spent for each type of activities (not displayed here), the previous findings are confirmed: MPs with responsibilities spend more time for political events and less for office hours than other MPs. The effect of seniority is not linear: Office hours’ times do not decrease with the number of mandate and social events do not increase. In other words, senior MPs do not spend more time for public events. Our argument is that local work does not depend on seniority and that a MP apply the same pattern of district work regardless the number of mandate he has. Other factors influence him and lead him to adapt his behavior but they are not directly linked to the seniority.

National resources do not directly influence constituency work because they are moderated by local resources. Hence, our argument is that two groups can be formed among MPs with high national resource: high and low local resources. In our view, the national resources define the intensity (strategic utility) of constituency work but not the concrete application of this strategy. This argument is specified in the next section.

**Toward a typology of role based on district work**

Previous results show us that national resources do not directly lead to a precise type of district behavior. The fact is that district work is linked to the local situation of MP and not directly to his position in Parliament. Our argument is that national resources indicate the global time to spend in constituency but not the type of activities. This last factor will be explained by the local situation and mainly by MPs’ social resources. Our first analyses allow us to introduce a typology of district based on the previous dimensions namely national and local resources. This typology allows us to highlight the effect of national resources which has been remained unclear. Our typology is summarized in the next table:
The first type of MP is the *Parliament Man* who has high resources at both local and national level. In other words, he is a MP who is well known by the citizens in his constituency but also at the national level. He has a great expertise thank to his career at both level. District work is not a strategy for itself; it is linked to his national work: this MP will spend time for political events and for issue which is linked to his national agenda. This kind of MP can jeopardize his political career by having a progressive ambition.

The second type of MP is the *delegator* who has high national resources but low local resources. Former junior minister or “parachuted” in a constituency, he does not have strong links with his district but his name is well known by citizens. More precisely, he generally is a leader of his political party with a notable career at the national level. Thanks to his notoriety, he can have a progressive ambition even if we expect that a position in the political party (and not the party group) is more standard. District work is more a question of delegation to collaborators who represent the MP. When they are in district, there is not a stable pattern of activities. On the contrary, a more diversified profile can be observed although the time spent in constituency is short and less regular than MPs with low national resources.
A third type of MP can be highlighted namely the *worthy* who has high local resources and more or less national resources. Depending on his seniority; he can have rather high resources at the national level. The ideal worthy is a MP who cumulates several mandates and has an executive office at the local level. However, an executive office is not a necessary condition: a MP can be a worthy thank to familial roots in the constituency or a professional career (firms, etc.). Like the parliament men, he can jeopardize his political career by having a progressive ambition and mainly an executive office at the national level (minister). In constituency, the worthy is characterized by his presence to public events in disfavor of office hours. In addition, the time spent for a particular activity is short.

The lasts types of MPs are those who have low resources at both national and local level. If we expect similar constituency work, it is important to divide these MPs in two groups due to ontological differences between them. The first group is the *learners*: this type of MP is characterized by the absence of previous career in an elected office. In other words, their mandate of MP is the first electoral mandate they have. This group is also characterized by a static ambition namely the reelection. They will spend more time in constituency than other categories of MP because their eligibility is played at the local level. Concretely, constituency work is diversified with a strong interest for office hours. The second group is the *constituency members*, close to the definition of Searing (1994) with a restriction about the incentive. These MPs become constituency member because it is a mean to achieve their goals and mainly their reelection. Because they do not have enough resources at the national, their eligibility is played at the local level. In addition, at the local level, their resources are also low and they apply a proactive strategy through office hours but not only. Like the learner, the diversity is the characteristics of these MPs.
Conclusion

In a context a crisis of representation and in a country like France, where trust in political institutions is very low in international comparison, exploring the work of the representatives become interesting. In this paper, we investigate the relationship between citizens and representatives by analyzing the activities organized by MPs in their district and, more precisely, by trying to construct a typology of parliamentary roles.

We started our paper by agreeing the theoretical argument of the strategic conception of parliamentary roles. According to Strøm (2012), we argue that MPs strategically follow behavioral routines in order to achieve their goals and constituency work is a routine. We argue that the rapport to this routine depend on two series of factors: national and local resources. The presence or the absence of one resource would be the starting point of a game of substitution which can be observable in district work.

Our results show that constituency work organization (in terms of collaborators recruitment and of activities) mainly depends on the local resources that a MP can use. National resources do not lead to a clear pattern due to the moderation effected by local resources. Thank to these results we were able to construct a first typology of district work which has to be developed. The categorization is built with the two dimensions detailed before. Our paper shows that constituency work is not homogeneous because depending of what a MP has in hands. In term of strategic utility of constituency work, national resources works as a moderator in the choice process which leads to organize constituency work. When the question is to explain concrete behavior, local resources become the most significant.

Further analyzes should develop the operationalization of resources because ours was too restrictive. We cannot understand the concept of resources only in terms of offices, regardless the level of governance. Resources are also the nature of contact with politicians but also the professional career of MPs. Further analyzes should also look at the behavior at
the national level. Our argument is that the typology can be applied at the national level: each category of MPs has a type of behavior. In other words, constituency work is only a part of the MPs work and a role (or a strategy) cannot be limited to it.

List of quoted references


ZITTEL, Thomas (2012). « Legislators and their representational roles. Strategic choices or habits of the heart? » In : BLOMGREN Magnus and Olivier ROZENBERG (eds.).

*Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures.* Londres : Routlegde/ECPR.