# POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN SPAIN:

# THE VIEW OF CITIZENS AND MPs

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## 1. Introduction

Spanish citizens seem not to be very happy with the way their MPs represent them. One of the most popular mottos in 2011 and 2012 spontaneous demonstrations and rallies was "They [MPs] do not represent us]. When asked about what they meant, citizens pointed both to he way representation is carried out by MPs (with an outstanding lack of responsiveness), as well as to the content of that representational activity (alien to their interests, needs and demands). At the same time, MPs seem to be convinced they are quite aware of citizens' problems, demands and needs, and keep saying they keep frequent and intense contacts with citizens and social and interest groups (Camacho y Oñate, 2014). But when data on their respective opinions on several dimensions of representation are analysed, quite a lot of incongruences and controversy arise.

Citizens' attitudes towards representation may be part of the general 'democratic crisis', 'democratic malaise', or 'democratic fatigue'. They may be also coherent with the traditional traits of the Spanish political culture: spread 'political apathy', 'democratic disaffection', 'outraged feelings with politics', 'democratic cynicism', and so on. But many of these indicators changed (towards the worse) with the economic crisis emerged in 2008. In such a context, studying political representation becomes relevant given it is the main mechanisms of the linkage between the political system and its citizens.

There are many indicators showing the big incongruences and gaps in the way Spanish citizens and their MPs see the way representation is being carried out: they deal with MP's reasons to run for election, whom MPs represent to, whose opinions MPs take into account when making their decisions at parliament, relevance of several representative activities, how should vote an MP when disagreeing with his or her party's position on a specific topic, what is the image provoked by an MP who votes in a different way his or her party decided. Citizens' and MPs' opinions on these topics are really far away: they show a great amount of incongruences that evidence how differently they perceive representational activity. And this gap in the way citizens and MPs perceive representative activity may drive citizens to more cynic attitudes towards political institutions. But the reason explaining such a lot of incongruences in the perception of representative activity may be that citizens and MPs

have different conceptions on what representation is and should work.

In the following pages I will analyse Spanish citizens' and MPs' way of understanding representation, in order to see if there is congruence among these respective conceptions or if they are separated by a gap which will avoid make very difficult that citizens feel satisfied with the way MPs develop their job. My aim is to shed light on why the former feel they are not being rightly and satisfactorily represented. In order to do so, I will next go over different methodological proposals to conduct empirical analyses of representation conceptions, concentrating in Andweg's and Thomassen's contribution (2005) and the two-dimensional model they propose, as the best analytical model to study conceptions on representation. In the second section I will use that model to analyse what are Spanish citizens' conceptions on representation; then, in the third section, I will gauge what are the Spanish national and regional MPs ones[1] using the same scheme in order to check the following hypothesis: *the dissatisfaction citizens express regarding MPs representation is based in a wide gap or incongruence on their respective conception (modes) of representation.* My aim is to study these modes of representation and to provide evidence of this gap between them. This is just an initial and exploratory analysis, which needs further elaboration in order to arrive to explanatory and the analysis of causal relationships.

Representation has been studied in the last decades from several approaches, both from normative (i.e., Urbinati and Warren, 2008) and empirical ones (i.e., Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005; Mansbridge, 2003 and 2011). This extensive research has proved representation can be studied from very different points of view, given its *multifaceted* and highly *complex* nature and practice (Pitkin, 1967). Part of this research has analysed empirically several of its domains, dimensions and elements, trying to operationalize them to grasp normative models (both from representatives and citizens), as well as citizens´ attitudes regarding their degree of satisfaction with the way they are represented by their parliamentarians or political leaders and parties, at large. These contributions have also analysed,

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[1] We will analyze the views of MPs from the National Lower Chamber (Congreso de los Diputados), as well as from regional (Autonomic) Parliaments of Andalucía, the Basque Country, Catalonya, and Valencia. Data from several sources will be used: Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas (CIS), Observatorio Político Autonómico (OPA) and PARTIREP Project.

firstly, the different normative conceptions on representation MPs and those represented have, and the degree of congruence among them; secondly, the gap between the expected and the perceived practice of representation citizens have, considering the ulterior consequences for the quality of democracy and its legitimacy.

Hanna F. Pitkin (1967) differentiated at least four dimensions that should be taken into account when trying to grasp a comprehensive conception of representation: Formal, descriptive, substantial, and symbolic dimensions of representation. All of them are interconnected as necessary parts of a complex and polyhedral phenomenon, pointing at different faces of the same relationship between citizens and those who represent them. Pitkin did not provide a scheme to operationalize these dimensions, what has been partially done by a good amount of researchers since her seminal work. Some authors, though, have complained about the lack of an integrated model of representation (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005).

On a more empirical perspective, Eulau and his associates (Eurlau et al., 1959) designed a two dimensional scheme for the study of electoral representation, building on Burke´s work and the idea of the roles the representatives perform in their work: They differentiated (for analytical purposes) between the 'style' of representation and the 'focus'. Style refers to how representation is exerted, differentiating the 'delegate' versus the 'trustee' modes of representing interests (they, later on added the 'politico' mode). Focus refers to the interest that are to be represented (initially, the national interests versus the local ones, the whole or part, although they considered there could be other not mutually exclusive foci, either territorial or non-territorial based foci, such as political parties, ethnicity, specific social groups interests, economic class, and so on). Institutional variables could affect what roles MPs prioritize: electoral system, candidate selection process, chamber standing orders, existence of several tiers of government, or type of political party, among others. Of course, political culture traits also could have a significant influence.

But these categories have some drawbacks since trustee-delegate views of representation would probably be both simultaneously right and a matter of degree in which they apply in each case. And these authors did not take into account the effects and distortions of omnipresent political parties, which –at least in

European countries political systems— play an overwhelming role over their MPs (Thomassen, 1994; Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005). In those systems, where political parties are centralized, hierarchical and disciplined, MPs will most likely act as political parties delegates, more than as mere citizens´ delegates or trustee representatives, getting closer to the *responsible party model* (Converse and Pierce, 1986).

Regarding foci, political parties will most likely also impose their views over MPs' opinions when the time comes to cast a vote. And the same MP may act representing national, local or regional interest, specific groups' ones, or those of the party in several moments of his or her activity. There could even be several simultaneous foci, working at the same time.

In order to avoid the drawbacks of these categories of analysis, Andeweg and Thomassen (2005) built on the microeconomic principal-agent framework (Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond, 2001), and proposed a new typology to study representation relationships between those represented or voters (*principal*) and the representative –either a party or a particular MP-- (*agent*). This new typology was based in the consideration of two important elements of the relationship: The first one is the direction of the relationship: should it consist primarily in a correct transfer of interests, demands and policy preferences of the represented into the decisions MPs make at parliament (*bottom-up*), or should that relationship consist primarily in the implementation of MPs (or his/her political party) decisions which later on are explained to voters to gain their support or approval for them (*top-down*). Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996) considered *responsiveness* was the clue in the bottom-up direction, whereas *accountability* was the touchstone for the top-down way of understanding representation. The premises are that citizens have exogenous preferences and that there are mechanisms for MP or her/his party to rightly gauge them. On the other hand, premises is that citizens will be interested in gathering a certain degree of information from their MPs or parties in order to vote as informed or educated voters.

The second element of Andeweg and Thomassen's typology is the moment in which the control by those represented over the representatives to is to be primarily exerted in order to prevent or avoid the agent to act differently from what the principal expects (contrary to his/her will, interests and needs): the vote can be

understood as ex-ante or ex-post instruments of control. It would be more or less what Mansbridge (2003) called *promissory* and/or *anticipatory representation*. For this element, authorization and delegation become relevant.

The aim would be to measure where citizens and MPs are regarding both elements and the extent to which there are or not congruencies in their views on representation. If measured as dichotomy categories, this two-dimensional approach allows building a matrix with four different possible combinations depending on the direction of the representation relationship (bottom-up or from above *versus* top-down or from below) and the moment in which the control mechanisms are exerted (ex-ante *versus* ex-post, when people votes mostly prospectively *versus* mostly retrospectively). These combinations represent four (weberian *ideal types*) modes of political representation under a typology that can be summarize as follows (table 1):

Figure 1. Modes of political representation

| | | Control mechanism | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ex-ante | Ex-post |
| Direction of representation relationship | Top-down/ From above | *authorization* | *accountability* |
| | Bottom-up/ From below | *delegation* | *responsiveness* |
| Source: Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005: 512. | | | |

Under *authorization* type of representation parties or representatives are to elaborate programmes expecting to attract citizens, who will vote for them expecting their representatives to develop these programmes during their term in office (as the *responsible party model*). As Andeweg and Thomassen (2005: 513) put it, this type implies that when citizens vote they issue a mandate to the representatives to implement their electoral programmes (either because they coincide with previous ideas citizens have –if they had any at all- or because citizens like what their parties/representatives propose them in the campaign), provided there are electoral alternative choices and citizens are able and do

differentiate them in a real and open competition. It also implies a high degree of agenda predictability.

Under *delegation* type of representational model citizens are supposed to have their informed political ideas and opinions, and expect representatives to aggregate them in their electoral programmes, and to accomplish to what they promise in the electoral campaign. This type of representation mode also implies the political agenda is quite predictable, as Andeweg and Thomassen (2005: 512) point out.

The third type of Andeweg and Thomassen representational mode, *accountability*, implies a representative who has an entrepreneur-like image, being proactive grasping and fostering ideas and actions their future potential voters will appreciate (Brennan and Hamlin, 1999: 115) and will prefer to those from other competitors. Voters may have no exogenous and previous or stable political ideas or opinions on their own, and the agenda may be changeable.

Finally, the *responsiveness* type implies that the representative or its party gauges citizens´ exogenous policy preferences, opinions or ideas, and implement them to please their future potential voters. Under this type of representation mode, citizens are supposed to have these exogenous preferences and representatives (or their –probably feeble or week-- parties are supposed to be aware of these preferences and adaptive or prone to their implementation in order to 'deserve' and get their vote in the future.

This typology seems quite convincing, overriding several drawbacks previous approaches lacked from. Nevertheless, it could be thought that it still leaves some elements of representation without complete clarification. It clarifies how the representation relationships should or do flow, but may be it could be complemented with two additional elements: On the one hand, gauging with more precision how that relationship (representation) is to be implemented, that is, what kind of activities are primarily to be developed by MPs to fulfil their tasks as representatives and under whose influence. On the other hand, a more precise indication on what and/or whose interests are or should be represented.

## 2. Citizens' conceptions on representation

Most Spanish citizens (up to 70 %) seem to be convinced that the vote is a relevant instrument for citizens to influence in political decisions. 'Voting in elections' is considered important in order to be a good citizen: it is valued in 8,6 (as an average) in a 10 points scale among a list of actions some one should perform to be considered as such. At the same time, parliaments (either the National or the regional ones) receive quite a lot of trust by Spanish citizens, above a good number of social and political institutions[2].

But at the same time, in the last 4 years the positive opinions on political parties have (as in many other political systems) diminished. They used to be overwhelmingly considered necessary for democracy (77% considered so), instruments which allow citizens to participate in the political system (75% consider them so) and adequate mechanisms for social interests to be represented (82% considered them so). Now a day, these opinions on political parties are not that clear-cut, and the supporting attitudes towards them have diminished considerably: only 62% consider them necessary for democracy, only 50% think they allow citizens´ participation in political system, and only 70% think they are necessary to represent social interests. At the same time, only 24% think political parties care for people´s opinions (it used to be 50% four years ago), when 94% of citizens think that this is one of the most important features that allow us to consider a political system as democratic[3].

These data make it necessary to study how Spanish citizens understand representation, how well they feel represented and to what point their model or conception on representation matches with that hold by their parliamentarians. In order to do so, we can start by analysing citizens´ opinions on whether representation should be a top-down or a bottom-up relationship. Surprisingly, data show us that most of them understand representation primarily as 'from above' kind of relationship that should consist mainly in representatives stating what they consider best for the country in order to try to convince later on to citizens about it, better than a bottom-up relationship in which representatives are to hold as precisely as possible what their potential voters think and expect (table 1).

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[2] Only the King, the armed forces and the police, the EU and the ngo´s deserve higher levels of trust in citizens´opinion. Data from OPA (Observatorio Político Autonómico), 2011.
[3] Data from OPA 2007 and 2011.

The other element of Andeweg and Thomassen model or representation refers to the moment in which citizens are to exert their control over those who represent them, so MPs do what voters expect. Accordingly with their opinion on what is what make a country a democratic one, most of Spanish citizens think the most important way of control is the ex-post one, exerting a retrospective vote, taking into account what candidates did in the past term, and not relaying that much in what they promise they will do in the next one (table 1).

Table 1. Conception of representation of Spanish citizens (in %)

| Direction of primarily relationship with MPs | Top-down (from above) | 62,8 |
|---|---|---|
| | Bottom-up (from below) | 37,2 |
| Primarily moment of control over MPs | Ex-ante (prospective) | 35,5 |
| | Ex-post (retrospective) | 64,5 |

Source: OPA, 2011 (N = 1430, excluding % don´t know/don´t answer). In the 'moment of control' question, a third possible answer existed –'both'--. Since only 10% of respondents choose it, it was treated here also as missing cases, given it would not mean a great lost of cases.

These data create a somehow peculiar and diverse model of representation for Spanish citizens, as Table 2 shows. Most citizens (almost 42%) seem to have an *accountability model* conception of representation, what seems quite congruent with the kind of strong, cohesive, and *synthetic* and *artificial* political parties we have (Oñate, 2008); congruent with an electorate not really proactive or involved in its political participation and political culture patters; and congruent with a rationalized parliamentarian system in which separation of powers is feeble and coalition governments is not a tradition (there has not been any at the national level in the last 35 years of democracy). In the Spanish systems representatives act under strong political parties directives and voters seem to act as a national electorate (more than as a constituency one), as Andeweg and Thomassen (2005: 214) suggest for this kind of model.

Table 2. Mode of representation of Spanish citizens

| | | Control mechanism | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ex-ante | Ex-post |
| Direction of representation relationship | Top-down/ From above | 20,7 | 41,6 |
| | Bottom-up/ From below | 14,5 | 23,2 |

Source: OPA, 2011. Cramers´ V = .053 (sig. .049).


Even if the *accountability* model of representation is the most popular one among Spanish citizens, it is not unanimous. There is a majority of citizens who seem to prefer a different model of representation, being the *responsiveness* one the next type more preferred, although at a large distance from the *accountability* prevailing one: favouring also an ex-post kind of control and having their own political ideas and opinions, those citizens prefer to judge their representatives under the light of their previous activity, once they check whether they look like those of their own: After all, 95% of Spanish citizens think political parties promise too many things they can not accomplish[4].

The other two groups of citizens seem to prefer a prospective vote, judging ex-ante the programmes strong and cohesive political parties offer them, in which they can find political alternatives similar to those of their own (*delegation*) or that they may find attractive and convincing (when they do not have previous ones –*authorization*--). Even if some of them do not trust parties or representatives will utterly stick to these programmes, they cast their vote for the party they prefer[5].

These way of understanding representation do not seem to be significantly related with how satisfied citizens are with the way democracy functions in Spain (the relationship is not significant enough, and the figures on each type of the modes of representation are basically the same, regardless the attitudes towards democratic

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[4] Source: OPA, 2011, q. 8: 'Do you agree with the following sentence: `political parties promise too many things they will not be able to accomplish'?'.
[5] Up to 85% of the participants in the OPA 2011 survey answered they did cast a vote in the last election, but the real turnout in that election was 66%. So it is not possible to check how many of those who prefer a *delegation* or *authorization* model of representation did in fact cast their vote. This high mismatch between the figures of declared and real turnout is usual in Spain.

functioning). And the same happens if we take into account the ideological position of the citizen: figures are almost the same (and the relationship does not appear as significant enough either, both considering several ideological positions or ideological groups).

Educational level of the interviewed seems to be related (and significantly enough) regarding both elements of the proposed model of representation. It could be expected that those with higher levels of education would prefer a bottom-up kind of relationship with their representatives, on the one hand, and an ex-post kind of control on them, on the other. But the data do not utterly follow these patterns: It does for the moment in which citizens prefer to exert the control over the representatives: those with higher levels of education are more in favour of the ex-post control (accordingly with the few levels of trust in the representatives/parties ability to accomplish their what they promise). The direction of the relationship representation should entail follows also the expected trend as the level of education increases but not for those having higher education levels. They seem to prioritize also the ex-post control, but curiously enough not the bottom-up (from above) kind of relationship. May be we could think they are the most cynical ones regarding representatives/parties ability of fulfil their promises (tables 3 and 4). These results don´t agree with the views Andeweg and Thomassen gauged for Dutch citizens.

Table 3. Most preferred direction of representation and educational level (%)

|  | None | Primary | Secondary | Higher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Top-down/ from above | 65,0 | 64,0 | 56,0 | 67,9 |
| Bottom-up /from below | 35,0 | 36,0 | 44,0 | 32,1 |

Source: OPA, 2011. N = 1.670. Cramers´ V = .105 (sig. .000).

Table 4. Most preferred moment of control and educational level (%)

|  | None | Primary | Secondary | Higher |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Ex-ante/ prospective | 48,6 | 40,9 | 38,0 | 27,9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ex-post/ retrospective | 51,4 | 59,1 | 62,0 | 72,1 |

Source: OPA, 2011. N = 1.429. Cramers´ V = .124 (sig. .000).

## 3. MPs' conceptions on representation

If we turn now to MPs view on representation things change significantly. First of all, our representatives are not that fond of reforming the system to increasing the number of referenda: whereas 82,5% of the Spanish Citizens consider that should be one of the prior reforms to improve the democratic quality of the system, only 35,2% of their representatives think so (even if 67,1% of MPs consider that holding referenda for the most important political questions is relevant to make a country a democracy). It is also true, though, that 92,2% of these MPs favour the reforms to create more opportunities for citizens to set the political agenda, and that 80% favour the reforms to increase the number of deliberative events where groups of ordinary citizens debate and decide on a particular issue[6]. But, at the same time, if they have are asked if the final decision for the most important issues should be put to the voters I a referendum or taken by MPs themselves, the opinions are quite divided: 35,8 favour the referendum and 32,3 that MPs have the final word[7].

When MPs are asked about the reasons for the lost of trust of citizens in politics and politicians only 41,8% agree upon one of the reasons is that parties (and, therefore, politicians) make too many promises on which they cannot deliver. And only 21,4% thinks this lost of trust may be due to the fact that most politicians are out of touch with people´s concerns[8]. The differences with citizens´ views on these regards are quite evident.

If we turn into the preferred *modes of representation* of MPs, we find that the PARTIREP database asked the questions on the

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[6] For citizens, OPA 2011 (q. 16). For MPs, PARTIREP 2011 (qs. 11 [N = 267] and 35 [N = 255]). The wordings of the questions are quite similar: 'How much would you favor reforms in the political system to…?'.
[7] PARTIREP 2011 (q. 34, [N = 251]).
[8] PARTIREP 2011 (q. 10[N = 268 and 271]).

direction of the representation relationship and the moment of control in a different way, offering respondents a 5 points scale, opening the door for a 'both' position in each question. Since there are not that many cases (around 250 of them), and approximately 33% chose this 'in-between' category, we can not treat them as missing cases for analysis clarity. Therefore, we have three possible answers regarding preferred direction of the representation relationship and preferred moment of control.

Data on the direction of the relationship show that most MPs, almost half of them, prioritize a bottom-up or from below type of representation, surprisingly contrary to what citizens do (table 5). And just a few of them prefer the top-down type of relationship, also contrary to what those represented do. These figures are not really consistent with MPs opinions on whether the most important decisions should be made by MPs or by citizens in a referendum (similar amount of responses for each option). And are neither consistent with their opinion on whether the number of referenda should be increased (only 35,2% believe so)[9]. But nevertheless, it could be argued that these variables are not really measuring exactly the same thing.

Regarding the moment in which the control of those represented over the representatives is to be made, the data show that MPs do not have a clear-cut position: more than a majority of them answer 'both' (maybe due to the difficulties they find answering this question, also pointed out by Andeweg and Thomassen [2005:516]). Among those who went for a clear-cut answer, the ex-ante option seems clearly the most preferred one (doubling the number of those preferring the ex-post alternative). Taking this fact into account, it seems MPs see representation as a relationship in which their promises and future actions are to be the main element of judgement (not precisely matching with their citizens views[10]).

Table 5. Conception of representation of Spanish MPs (in %)

| Direction of primarily | Top-down (from above) | 16,7 |
|---|---|---|

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[9] The relationship between the variables 'preferred direction of the representation relationship' and 'favoring more referenda' is not significant, so no useful results can be shown to check empirically this mismatch.

[10] May be it is worth it to remember that only 42% of MPs think parties make too many promises on they can not deliver, whereas 95% of citizens believe so.

| relationship between Citizens and MPs | Both | 36,5 |
|---|---|---|
| | Bottom-up (from below) | 46,8 |
| Primarily moment of control over MPs | Ex-ante (prospective) | 32,5 |
| | Both | 51,0 |
| | Ex-post (retrospective) | 16,5 |

Source: PARTIREP 2011 (N = 252 and 249, respectively).

If we recode both variables in order to get dichotomise answers for each of them, we would be able to present the mode of representation for Spanish MPs. The resulting data should be taken carefully, since the valid cases are only 89 (considering missing cases those from the 'both' answer, as well as the 'not applicable' one). The significance of the results is, therefore, doubtful. Nevertheless, it may be worth it to see the resulting model of representation of MPs (Table 6).

| Table 6. Model of representation of Spanish citizens and MPs (in %) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Citizens | MPs |
| Primarily direction of relationship between Citizens-MPs | Top-down (from above) | 62,8 | 16,7 |
| | Both | -- | 36,5 |
| | Bottom-up (from below) | 37,2 | 46,8 |
| Primarily moment of control over MPs | Ex-ante | 31,4 | 32,5 |
| | Both | 11,6 | 51,0 |
| | Ex-post | 57,0 | 16,5 |

Source: OPA 2011 (N = 1.671 and 1.618) and PARTIREP 2011 (N = 252 and 249). For this table, the 'both' option has been considered in the Moment variable for citizens, for comparative purposes.

Table 6 compares the data on the preferred direction and moment of control for citizens and MPs (even if data on direction are not fully comparable given the different numbers of possible answers

in both surveys for this questions). Nevertheless, it is clear that the opinions between represented and representatives are quite diverse: Citizens prefer a top-down and ex-post model of representation, whereas MPs seem to prefer a bottom-up and ex-ante model one (leaving aside the both categories). The respective figures are quite relevant (doubling or almost doubling those who prefer the opposite way).

If we recode the both variables in order to get dichotomise answers for each of them, we would be able to present the mode of representation for Spanish MPs. The resulting data should be taken carefully, since the valid cases are only 89 (considering missing cases those from the 'both' answer, as well as the 'not applicable' one). The significance of the results is, therefore, doubtful. Nevertheless, it may be worth it to see the resulting model of representation of MPs (Table 7).

Table 7. Mode of representation of Spanish MPs

|  |  | Control mechanism | |
|  |  | Ex-ante | Ex-post |
| Direction of representation relationship | Top-down/ From above | 18,0 | 5,6 |
|  | Bottom-up/ From below | 40,4 | 36,0 |

Source: PARTIREP, 2011. Cramers´ V = .200 (sig. .059).

As was the case with the Spanish citizens, their MPs have a complex combination of views on representation, showing different patterns or models in this regard. The most popular type of model of representation is the *delegation* one: a bottom-up/from below and ex-ante way or understanding the relationship of representation with their citizens. These patterns do not match with the ones those represented have: in fact, it seems the MPs believe their citizens have their own political ideas and proposals, and that they care to see them reflected in the electoral programmes they will or not vote for. The next most popular type (although in similar level of support among the studied MPs) is the *responsiveness* one: those who also believe citizens have their own political ideas and do not need parties

to suggest them, but prefer to exert the control in a retrospective way: they vote for their representatives according to what they have done in the past and not so much because of their promises. This is also the second most popular type of representation mode for citizens, although at a bigger distance to the first one.

The other two types seem to receive much less support among the studied MPs: *authorization* type is preferred only by 18% of them, those who seem to understand representation as a kind of relationship for which they trust in the party structure to elaborate a good programme the citizens could vote for. Only a 5,6% of the MPs seem to have an *accountability* understanding of the representation, the most preferred type by citizens.

The modes of representation of Spanish citizens and MPs, according to the combination of the two mentioned dimensions (direction of the relationship and moment of the control over the representatives) seem to follow opposite tracks and patterns. This gap could be contributing to the widening of the confidence gap and un-satisfaction with the way democracy works that can be measured in Spanish politics (as well as in other systems, as Andeweg and Thomassen [2005: 522] suggest). The degree of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Spain has decreased rapidly in the last years: in 2005 the proportion of satisfied citizens reached 61%. In 2007 it had dropped to 55% and to 32% in 2011[11]. Last year´s citizen demonstrations by '*anger citizens*' show their awareness of this gap between the respective modes of representation. These demonstrations got a generalized support among different social groups (66% of the population supported the demonstrations and their demand, and 70% understood the topics raised by these anger citizens affected to the whole Spanish society[12]: One of the most popular mottos in these demonstrations was 'They [the politicians/representatives] do not represent us'. This feeling of being wrongly represented may be gauged in several specific dimensions, as is shown next.

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[11] Data from CIS Study 2.588 (2005), OPA-2007 and OPA-2011. The main feelings politics suggest to citizens is distrust and indifference (CIS Study 2.914, 2011) and the proportion of citizens who consider the political parties and the politicians as one of the three main problems of the country has multiplied by 4 in the last 4 years (raising from 6% to 24% -several Studies by CIS-).
[12] Data from OPA-2011.

## 4. Final remarks

Spanish citizens do not seem to feel well represented by their MPs. This feeling is expressed in many different ways and regarding different dimensions of the complex phenomenon of representation. The feeling 'They [MPs] do not represent us' is widely spread among citizens. There are many incongruences or inconsistencies in the way both -citizens and MPs- see different elements of the representative function and activity.

We used Andeweg and Thomassen (2005) methodological proposal to analyzed the conceptions on representation both citizens and MPs have. The evidence analyzed shows there is a huge gap between these respective conceptions. The preferred models by the former are quite the opposite to those of the later, what has political implications.

When trying to analyze the factors explaining citizens' conceptions on representation only educational level was statistically significant and worked in the expected way. Satisfaction with the way democracy works and ideology were not statistically significant (though the figures regarding each mode of representation were very similar). Future research should analyze if this gap has evolved, shortening or widening, as MPs and parties seem to be worried about citizens' attitudes towards them.

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