

Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Susana Salgado (ICS-ULisboa) | *The crisis of political representation in Portugal: a longitudinal perspective – 2002-2015*

Most political science research is concerned with the supply side of politics, i.e., the ability of political actors to attract supporters; instead, citizenship research is frequently interested in politics' demand side, i.e., what citizens ask from politicians and their satisfaction with the existing party supply. The present study addresses the evaluation of political parties and politicians by Portuguese citizens on the basis of a longitudinal analysis of post-electoral surveys that illustrates whether such evaluation reveals a misfit between the «market» and the «forum» (Elster, 1986) and indeed a «crisis of political representation» such as described by the literature (e.g. Porras Nadales, 1996).

The electors' feeling of being adequately represented or not by political parties and politicians proved to be a good measure of the adequacy of Portuguese democratic institutions to citizen's expectations. Specifically, we analysed behavioural and attitudinal relations between the citizenry and political parties and actors. Concerning political parties, our results show that the overall evaluation of respondents was below 50%. However, the actual feeling of being well represented is better understood when these assessments are distributed into different dimensions: (1) the normative one, according to which «political parties are necessary to democracy», was internalized by the vast majority of respondents; instead, (2) the affective one, i.e., the identification with a given party, was well below 50%; (3) the actual performance of parties was even less positively evaluated; (4) finally, citizens' active support to parties was only acknowledged by a small minority. Regarding politicians, their average evaluation was clearly below that of parties. To conclude, such results indicate that, from the viewpoint of citizens, political representation in Portugal has been suffering from a large number of negative evaluations which provide an empirical expression to several theoretical and analytical aspects of a relevant «crisis of political representation».