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Representing the People

A Survey among Members of Statewide
and Sub-state Parliaments

Edited by
Kris Deschouwer and
Sam Depauw

C O M P A R A T I V E P O L I T I C S

REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE

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This book is the result of a large comparative project. It reports the results of a survey among members of both statewide and sub-state parliaments in fifteen countries. Legislators of seventy-three assemblies were invited to answer our questions and 2,326 responses could be used for the analysis. Bringing these data together was a huge enterprise to which many people contributed. In each of the fifteen countries addresses had to be gathered, invitations and reminders had to be sent out, party leaders and group leaders of the different parliaments had to be convinced, and in some places face-to-face interviews had to be conducted. This was a collective enterprise and that shows in the way in which the book has been put together. All the chapters are co-authored—there are thirty-three authors in total—and all the names appearing in the book are names of colleagues who have contributed to the preparation of the survey, its fieldwork, and the analysis of the data.

We have been able to prepare the survey and the book very carefully. The group met four times in Brussels, first to discuss possible themes to be covered in the questionnaire, the operationalization of concepts and methodological choices to be made, and a second time to discuss the draft questionnaire. A third meeting was devoted to the research questions for each of the chapters of the book and at a fourth and final meeting we discussed the draft chapters of the book. That was all made possible thanks to the financial support of the Belgian Federal Science Policy. The research scheme on Inter-university Attraction Poles has funded the PARTIREP project on participation and representation in modern democracies, of which the MP survey was an important part. We are very grateful for this support.

Most of the people who participated in the planning of the project also appear as co-authors of one or more chapters. We would, however, also like to thank the colleagues who did not contribute as authors to this book, but whose input was very important for setting up and for executing the project. We have very much appreciated the help and input of Marc Hooghe, Sofie Marien, Petra Meier, Lieven De Winter, Heinrich Best, Michael Edinger, Jacek Wasilewski, José Manuel Leite Viegas, Mónica Méndez Lago, Isabelle Guinaudeau, Tinette Schnatterer, Patrick Lengg, Oliver Strijbis, Emilie van Haute, Jonas Lefever, Teun Pauwels, and Michael Saward.

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to do so, and that has resulted in a very rich set of data on the way in which members of parliament represent the people.

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Kris Deschouwer
Sam Depauw

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Representing the People in Parliaments

Kris Deschouwer, Sam Depauw, and Audrey André

1.1 REPRESENTATION AND DEMOCRACY

Modern democracy is basically organized through representation. Governing by taking into account the wishes and demands of the people is indeed put into practice by allowing the people to elect those who govern in their name. Elected assemblies are meant to make society present and to let it deliberate about its future policies. That does not mean that representation is the only way in which democracy can be organized. And it does not mean that all forms of representation are democratic. Democracy and representation are two different things. Yet these twin concepts have become deeply connected to each other since representation became the dominant form to organize democracy (Manin 1997; Ankersmit 2008; Keane 2009; Alonso, Keane, and Merkel 2011).

This representative democracy comes in many different ways. Within the family of representative democracies there is indeed a wide variety of procedures and institutions. Electoral systems—to state the most obvious—display many differences. And the different electoral formulae, district sizes, and thresholds can be seen in endless combinations. The literature on electoral systems has not only illustrated this variety but has also pointed at the influences of the electoral rules on the functioning of party systems (e.g. Duverger 1951; Lijphart 1994). The way in which members of representative assemblies are elected also strongly influences the way in which they perceive and fulfill their task. The size of the parliaments, the number of houses, and the length of the term are a few other elements of the institutional context that can shape the process and practice of political representation.

Yet what all representative democracies have in common is the very obvious fact that members of parliamentary assemblies are elected. There are some exceptions to that rule in countries where a (second) house of the parliament is not or not fully elected, but these do not even nuance the statement that representative democracy is organized today as *elected democracy*. Elections are the basic procedure by which the members of a society give the political elite the right to govern in the name of the people. Candidates for elected positions

are now furthermore very seldom running on their own. Another obvious feature of the current organization of representative democracy is the central role played by *political parties*. Although individuals are elected, the process of representation is collective. Candidates and elected members of parliament belong to political parties and behave as such. Political parties select the candidates for elections. Political parties compete with each other by referring to their identity, to party ideology, to the party platform, and partisan proposals to convince the voters that their ideas, interests, and identities will be better represented by them than by another party. This allows the citizens to make a meaningful choice and to send out representatives whose actions and attitudes in parliament will be to a certain extent predictable. Elected members of parliament behave indeed mostly in a coherent way, by defending the same ideas as their fellow partisans and by voting in the same way. The ideological and programmatic banner and the implicit and explicit policy pledges that are related to them offer citizens the tools and mental shortcuts with which they can judge the degree in which the representatives and their parties have indeed kept their promises and can be given another term in power. Parties thus offer voters, candidates, and elected representatives easy shortcuts for organizing the dialogue between citizens and decision-making, for understanding what they want and what they do and for finding each other both on election day and between election days. Modern representative democracy is both elected democracy and party democracy (Ranney 1962; Castles and Wildemann 1986; Katz 1987; Manin 1997; Mansbridge 2003).

There is one other important yet obvious and therefore most often implicit characteristic of elected democratic representation: it happens within the territorial limits of the national state. The current form of democratic government did indeed develop with and within the boundaries of national states. The mobilization of citizens, the granting and expansion of voting rights and of the related democratic liberties, and the development of political parties as central actors in the organization of elections occurred in national states. The process of state formation itself deeply influenced the way in which and the degree in which societal cleavages, political parties, and voter alignments could develop (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Flora, Kuhnle and Urwin 1999; Bartolini 2005).

1.2 DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION UNDER STRESS

This model of state-bound, elected, and partisan representative democracy appears today to be under stress. Modern democracy is widely believed to be in a state of crisis. Whether representative democracy can survive in its

current form is a matter of concern, debate, and scientific research (e.g. Alonso, Keane, and Merkel, 2011). Part of that debate is not at all new, and reflects the fact that democracy and representation have empirically been connected to each other but are not identical. Quite crucial in this respect is the question whether representation can be a form of democracy at all. Representation makes the people present in an elected assembly, but at the same time takes the power of decision-making and deliberation away from them and endows it to an elite that is different from the people. Representation installs an elected aristocracy (Manin 1997; Urbinati 2011; Ankersmit 2008). The line between the representatives and those being represented will therefore always be in some way disturbed. All forms of representation imply misrepresentation. And therefore the normative question to what extent and even whether the representation is good or can be good (e.g. Dovi 2007) cannot be avoided. Discussions about descriptive representation or substantive representation search for ways in which the built-in gap between elected representatives and those represented can be kept as limited as possible. The classic distinction between delegates who receive a clear mandate from their constituency and trustees who can fill in their role more freely also searches for the best way to organize the linkage between the elected agent and the represented principal (Eulau et al. 1959; Pitkin 1967; McCrone and Kuklinski 1979).

Some recent debates do tap into that issue of the compatibility between representation and democracy. The populist critique questions the decent functioning of representation. Populism points at misrepresentation, at elites that do not truly represent, at political institutions and rules and checks and balances in which the people are hard to find and in which the people are not speaking the last word. Populism is indeed a vision of democracy in which the people themselves and not representatives at the end of a disturbed and crooked line should be the main point of reference (Taggart 2004; Mény and Surel 2002; Canovan 1999). Defenders of the 'deliberative turn' search for alternative ways to represent society. Deliberative assemblies can be put together by using random sampling, which guarantees every member of society an equal chance of being part of the representative assembly. And in the functioning of these assemblies the importance of debate and discussion for finding common solutions is stressed and contrasted with the sterile aggregation of preferences in the elected and partisan representation (Bächtiger 2005; Bohman 1996; Dryzek 2000).

Yet if in the course of the last decades the viability of representative democracy is being questioned, this is done with reference to recent empirical developments rather than to the broader debate about the democratic value of representation. These empirical developments involve very much the role of political parties and the territorial organization of the state, two of the cornerstones of the practice of representative democracy. As said above, the political parties are the main actors of representative democracy. They

structure the electorate and the political competition, but also the political decision-making and the functioning of the parliament. Yet political parties appear to be in trouble. The indicators for supporting this statement are by now well known. Opinion polls have shown repeatedly that political parties are among the least trusted actors of modern democracy. The relevance of this is not to be underestimated. It means that the organizations that select candidates for elections, that organize the activities of those that have been elected, that form and support governments and that at the end of the term ask permission to do that again, are not at all seen as organizations that can be trusted. Yet it is exactly the electoral process that should give them the legitimate right to govern (Mair 2009).

Another well-documented indicator is the decline of party membership (Van Biezen, Mair, and Poguntke 2012). There are some nuances and there are some parties that are able to increase their membership numbers, but the general trend leaves no doubt about what is happening. The decline of membership numbers reflects, on the one hand, a gradual withering away of the party on the ground, of the party as an organization rooted in society and connected to other organizations. It reflects on the other hand the strengthening of the party in public office, of the party as an organization that governs (Katz and Mair 1995).

The loosening of the ties with the societal roots is being reflected in voting behaviour. Here also the story is well known and well documented. The erosion of group interests and group identities based on class and religion has broken the solid and obvious link between societal groups and the parties historically belonging to them and representing their identity and interests in the policymaking process. Voters therefore easily switch between parties and are attracted—often only temporarily—by new parties mobilizing on new issues or trying to challenge existing parties on their position (Lucardie 2000). The result is a volatile electorate, of many voters in search of a party that might be able to represent them. The result is parties trying to reposition themselves, to redefine and adapt their ideological appeal to a secularized and post-industrial society. The result is parties trying to identify who their voters are and how they might be able to recreate solid bonds with them (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Evans 1999; Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992; Kriesi 1998).

One of the indicators of this lower capacity of parties to organize and to mobilize the electorate is the ‘personalization’ of politics (Karvonen 2010; Colomer 2011; McAllister 2007). The notion is still fairly vague and refers to different evolutions, but most authors using the term and trying to assess the importance of personalization do stress the fact that a shift is taking place from the use of a partisan frame to a personal frame in the dialogue between voters and their elected representatives. Persons, personal characteristics, and personal actions that can differentiate politicians from their party (and from

the other candidates) are becoming more important. And in this sense the process of personalization—even if the empirical evidence for it is so far quite mixed—also points at changing patterns of political representation and of legitimization of decision-making.

Changes in society, erosion of the boundaries between social groups and thus in the ideological language of partisan competition are very important evolutions that oblige parties to rethink and reshape their organizations and strategies. These are thus changes that thoroughly affect the way in which political representation can be organized. Yet the evolutions on the input side of political systems are not the only elements putting pressure on the traditional forms of partisan electoral representation. Parties are confronting distrust and volatile voters while simultaneously a number of important elements of the broader institutional context are subject to change. Among these is the fragmentation of the centres of power. Several European countries have recently gone through a territorial reorganization granting power in varying ways to sub-national entities. Political representation in these multilevel systems is a complex and ‘compounded’ affair (Tuschhoff 1999), with all but straight and clear lines between population and those representing it. In multilevel systems all levels have limited powers, share competencies with other levels, and have conflicts amongst them and sometimes inside the parties governing at different levels. Governments in multilevel systems can shift the blame because it is never easy to trace exactly where demands have been voiced and to which demands the policies are responding.

The gradual and slow but in the end quite substantial growth of the importance of the European Union level of decision-making also has important effects on the way in which parties can represent their voters. Parties are indeed increasingly torn between responsiveness and accountability to the voters on the one hand and demands to be ‘responsible’, that is, to act and to conduct policies that abide by rules and principles that are put forward by the institutions of the European Union and of other international organizations or agencies. There are very extreme examples of that in countries like Greece and Portugal that have been obliged to seek external financial help and whose policies are now closely monitored by a ‘troika’ of European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund. But the very existence of the European Union to which many crucial policy instruments have been transferred has added a new and quite complex locus of power to that of the sovereign national state. Especially governing parties need to be the agents of many principals and not only of their constituents. They have problems legitimizing their policies in terms of representation, in terms of responses to the principal that is the most important one in democracy—the people. For non-governing parties it is then easy to demonstrate that the elected elite does not truly represent but misrepresents the population (Mair, 2009; Mair and Thomassen 2010).

This is—in a nutshell—the inspirational background for the research on which we report in this book. While political representation is at the core of modern democracy, the debates about the crisis of democracy point at difficulties for creating a meaningful linkage between the population and the elites representing them. An interesting and crucial question is then how the representatives themselves perceive their role and task. The best way to assess that is by asking them.

1.3 SURVEYING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

1.3.1 Case Selection

The chapters in this book are all based on new data that were gathered among members of parliament. The project was initiated by the research programme PARTIREP, an inter-university network financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy (<<http://www.partirep.eu>>). The network is engaged in several research projects on the changing patterns of participation and representation in modern democracies. One of these projects was a cross-national survey among MPs, to which researchers from Belgium and from fourteen other countries were associated.

Fifteen countries have indeed been selected for the fieldwork, allowing for a wide variation of state structures, electoral systems, and party systems. Since the territorial (re)organization of the state was identified as one of the possible elements that affects the functioning of democratic representation, we have included the most important multilevel countries. These are the classic federal states, but also the more hybrid decentralized states and states with directly elected parliaments for special status territories. The multilevel countries—nine in total—covered are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The six other—unitary—countries are Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Poland, and the Netherlands.

In the nine multilevel democracies the PARTIREP project further surveyed a number of regional parliaments. In Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland all regional parliaments were included (except for Appenzell-Innerrhoden). In other countries a selection was made, observing a balance from the east and the west in Germany (i.e. Brandenburg, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Thuringia), from the north and the south in Italy (Calabria, Campania, Lazio, Lombardy, Tuscany, and Aosta Valley), and in Spain between autonomous regions with stronger and weaker regionalist traditions (Andalusia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Valencia).

The selection further takes into account variation in size, electoral institutions, and party control of the regional government. In France it proved feasible only to survey Poitou-Charentes and Aquitaine. In the cases of Portugal and the United Kingdom there are marked asymmetries in terms of regional representation. The autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores (both included) have elected representatives at both the state-wide and sub-national levels, whereas mainland Portugal does not. Scotland and Wales (both included) have regional parliaments, whereas England does not. The selection of sub-state parliaments thus ranges from the lowest regional authority (in Portugal and the United Kingdom) to the highest (Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland) as captured by Hooghe et al.'s (2008) index, combining the self-rule and shared rule dimensions first identified by Elazar (1987). The self-rule dimension measures the scope of devolved policies, fiscal autonomy, and administrative decentralization at the sub-national level; whereas the shared-rule dimension taps into sub-national participation in the state-wide legislative and executive arena, with regard to fiscal control and constitutional reform. The total number of parliaments in which the survey was conducted is seventy-three.

The elected representatives in this selection are elected using a wide variety of electoral institutions. Some are elected using plurality or majoritarian electoral formulae; some under proportional representation; and others in hybrid mixed-member systems combining a nominal tier and a proportional tier. Some are elected in preferential systems where voters have the option to indicate a preference among co-partisans running under the same party label; others in non-preferential systems where voters do not have that option. In addition, they represent districts of various magnitudes, ranging from single-seat districts to at-large nation-wide constituencies in Israel and the Netherlands.

Of course electoral institutions are installed by parties, mirroring party systems, and in turn shape party systems (Colomer 2005; Duverger 1951). Third, the selection therefore represents various party systems, ranging from two-party systems to extreme multi-party systems. Many are mainstream parties; others are niche parties putting forward issues that were previously outside the scope of party competition (Ezrow 2010; Meguid 2010). Several countries include strong regional and regionalist parties, challenging the polity that they are part of. By including countries that differ widely in state structure, electoral institutions, and party systems the PARTIREP survey further observes a geographical variety that ranges from Norway in the north to Israel in the south; and from Ireland in the west to Hungary and Poland in Central and Eastern Europe. It includes long-standing democracies and new democracies like Hungary, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. Represented are populations as large as Germany's and as small as Norway's; ethnically homogeneous societies such as Poland and divided societies like Belgium

and Israel. All fifteen countries are—except for Switzerland—systems of *parliamentary government* in that the cabinet can be voted out of office by any majority in the legislature by means of a (constructive) motion of no confidence (Strøm 2000).

1.3.2 Description of the Data

For each parliament in the selection, macro data has been collected on the level of the political system, the party, and the district. The electoral rules, legislative organization, and the balance of powers between the national and regional levels of government constitute the most important system-level variables. Party characteristics include the party's ideology, size of the parliamentary group, and candidate selection procedures. District characteristics focus on geographical location, population size, and surface. Gathering data on the level of the individual legislator further required a two-pronged approach. First, information on a legislator's socio-demographic background and career trajectory is publicly available and has been collected from official sources such as the parliamentary websites and 'who's who' guides. Background variables include age, education, previous occupation, previous political career, and leadership positions they hold in the party and in parliament.

Second, the PARTIREP survey examined legislators' attitudes and characteristic behaviours. Conceptions of representation were explored through questions on the democratic system, role orientations, and constituency definition. Self-reported behaviour includes their actions in parliament, in the parliamentary party group, and in the constituency. Particular attention was given to the extent and nature of contact between legislators within and across parliaments. The questionnaire also captured the campaign strategies they pursue and how vulnerable they estimate they are to electoral defeat. The study examines prominent election issues, including attitudes to economic issues and opinions on felony, gender equality, and immigration. General attitudes on the left–right dimensions of the policy space, devolution, and Europeanization were also sought. The study investigates how legislators go about their duties representing the people and how they see their political future.

The survey was designed with a closed-ended question format either presenting legislators with a scale or a limited number of options to choose from. Occasionally they were asked to fill out a number estimate or to specify what they think of when ticking the box 'other'. To develop the questionnaire input was received from a wide circle of legislative scholars and extensive pilot interviews with former politicians. To guarantee cross-national comparability the survey was kept rigorously constant in content. If required, the question wording was adapted slightly to better reflect countries' or parliaments'

institutional peculiarities. In Israel and the Netherlands or Brussels and Geneva, for instance, reference is made to the local area instead of the district as legislators are elected in a single constituency. Teams of researchers in each of the participating countries continuously worked in close contact to translate the questionnaire into fourteen languages (including some regional languages). Teams from Belgium, France, and Switzerland collaborated on the French version; teams from Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland on the German version; teams from Italy and Switzerland on the Italian version; and teams from Belgium and the Netherlands on the Dutch version. Translations were compared within a broader language group, moreover.

Between spring 2009 and winter 2012 all members of the selected parliaments were contacted, employing a variety of methods. The fieldwork was done at different moments in the electoral cycle in different countries (Table 1.1). In Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland for instance the study took place mid-term, the general elections a distant horizon. In the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, by contrast, data collection ended with the start of the election campaign. Significant rescheduling ensued following sudden crises in government prompting early elections in Ireland and the Netherlands, a breaking scandal in the United Kingdom, a natural disaster in Madeira, and the 10 April 2010 plane crash in Poland which killed ninety-six, among them the president and fifteen members of parliament.

In most countries a combination of web-based and print questionnaires were used. Legislators typically received a personalized introduction letter and email presenting the project and inviting them to participate by web-based survey. Postal and email addresses were sourced from the public domain, in particular the parliamentary websites. The introduction letter emphasized the cross-national comparative design and detailed our anonymity policy. In the United Kingdom endorsements were added from party leaders and senior members of the party. They further received at least two online reminders (excluding 'hard' refusals) and the option was offered to them to fill out a print questionnaire. A final invitation was frequently by telephone—in order to boost response rates. In Austria, however, only print questionnaires were sent. In Hungary, Israel, and the Netherlands legislators were interviewed.

The PARTIREP cross-national survey netted 2,326 responses (having answered at least 25 per cent of the questionnaire)—that is, about one in four elected representatives filled out the questionnaire. The number is similar to other projects of comparable scope. It is lower than we dared hope for but better than some. Parliamentary elites are notoriously pressed for time and increasingly suffer from survey fatigue. Finally, 2,096 completed the questionnaire, taking them thirty minutes on average to respond to all forty-six questions. Dropout, moreover, cannot be traced back to particular questions deemed incomprehensible, confidential, or vexing by respondents. No

TABLE 1.1 *The PARTIREP MP survey: fieldwork period, method, return rates, and representativeness*

	Number of regional parliaments in the selection	Fieldwork period	Method				Number of responses	Return rate	Duncan index of dissimilarity regarding			
			online	hard copy	interview	telephone			National			
									vs. regional level	Government vs. opposition	Party	Sex
Austria	9	2011		x			227	36.0	5	0	5	4
Belgium	4	2009	x	x			163	35.2	11	3	10	2
France	2	2011	x	x			90	12.6	25	8	21	8
Germany	4	2009–10	x	x			279	26.5	11	6	8	2
Hungary	—	2009			x		99	25.8	—	1	2	1
Ireland	—	2009–10		x			34	22.4	—	5	8	4
Israel	—	2009			x		39	32.5	—	13	18	3
Italy	6	2010–11	x	x	x	x	128	12.9	28	6	16	3
Netherlands	—	2010–11			x		65	43.3	—	6	18	1
Norway	—	2009	x	x			46	27.2	—	5	9	2
Poland	—	2009–10	x	x			55	12.0	—	4	14	6
Portugal	2	2010	x	x			118	35.3	4	1	7	1
Spain	4	2011	x	x			272	35.4	7	7	16	4
Switzerland	25	2010	x	x			604	21.8	1	5	13	3
United Kingdom	2	2010	x	x	x	x	107	12.9	19	5	14	0

Note: The Duncan index of dissimilarity measures the percentage differences between the distribution in the population and the sample. The index ranges from 0 (no difference) to 100 (maximum difference).

particular questions stand out with larger numbers of 'no answer'. Table 1.1 reports response rates per country.

Cross-national differences in response rate make the question of representativeness of critical importance. Table 1.1 further reports representativeness tests for the level of government, for government-opposition, and for party. The Duncan index of dissimilarity measures differences between the sample and the population distributions. The selection closely resembles the population in most respects: the deviation in the level of government in the samples from the populations is 8 per cent; it is 3 per cent for the balance between parties supporting the government and opposition parties; and 4 per cent for the balance between the sexes. For individual countries the Duncan index is below 15 per cent in most cases. In Austria, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland differences in response rates are small between national and regional legislators—about 10 per cent at most. In some of the larger countries, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, the differences are higher, regional legislators participating more often than national legislators. It has been our experience that securing legislators' participation by personally contacting representatives is labour- and time-intensive. High return rates are harder to obtain in this manner in the larger parliaments.

Differences regarding government and opposition parties are below 10 per cent in most cases. Only in Israel is the balance more skewed against government parties. As a result of the high fractionalization of the Israeli party system a considerable number of members of the Knesset on the government side are members of the cabinet, who as a rule participate less in surveys. With regard to party composition, differences between the samples and populations are below 15 per cent in most cases. Larger discrepancies are often situated in the more fragmented party systems. In Israel government parties, but in particular Likud, are underrepresented. In the Netherlands the survey has focused on the mainstream government and opposition parties, excluding smaller right-wing and religious formations, PVV and SGP. In Italy Partito Democratico is slightly overrepresented and Berlusconi's Popolo della Libertà slightly underrepresented. In France and Spain the balance favours the Socialist Party at the cost of the Conservative Party. But in each of these cases deviations among the main parties account for about 10 per cent; the remainder is due to the accumulation of deviations among a large number of minor parties. Differences in the sex balance in the individual countries are low and exceed 5 per cent only in France and Poland, with women participating more than men in these cases. More caution might be advisable for those countries with low return rates. For this reason the data are first weighted by parliamentary party in each parliament and then a corrective weight is applied to correct overrepresentation of the Swiss cantonal parliaments. In any case comparative analyses focusing on relations between variables should be less subject to this potential problem.

1.4 PLAN OF THE BOOK

To what extent can political representation (still) be understood as an activity that is driven by belonging to a political party? To what extent is the responsible party model the frame that gives meaning to political representation and that guides the actions and strategic choices of members of parliament? Or do MPs to the contrary search for more personal and individual strategies to respond to their voters and to seek election and re-election? Does it matter whether the representative role is played in a statewide parliament or in the parliament of a sub-state? Is representation different in strong and powerful sub-states than in weaker sub-states? Can we confirm that the electoral system affects the way in which members of parliament opt for particular roles and strategies? Can members of parliament be free and creative or is their choice rather limited by the institutional context in which they have to function?

The PARTIREP MP survey covers a wide variety of institutional contexts, and the data thus do allow us to answer these questions. Each of the chapters of the book looks at a different aspect of parliamentary representation, and always from a comparative perspective. All chapters use all the countries and all the parliaments, except for chapter 10 that only looks at the MPs in multilevel states.

Chapter 2 looks at the classic notion of representational roles. Agnieszka Dudzińska, Corentin Poyet, Olivier Costa, and Bernhard Weßels look at the two dimensions of these roles: the focus and the style of representation. The focus of representation defines whom MPs represent or should represent: the electorate as a whole or a part of it, like specific categories and subgroups of the electorate. The style of representation on the other hand describes the way in which an MP comes to his or her decisions: by following his or her own judgment (acting as a trustee) or by following others' instructions (acting as a delegate). For both dimensions of the role, Dudzińska et al. assume that institutional factors can help explain the choices made by MPs. The decision to represent the whole nation or the interests of specific groups and the decision to act as a trustee or as a delegate appears indeed not to be a matter of personal choice or personal background. In particular the level of government at which MPs have been elected appears to be very important for both the focus and the style of representation.

In chapter 3 Daniele Caramani, Karen Celis, and Bram Wauters analyse the extent to which MPs claim to represent specific groups in society. The traditional partisan representation assumes a clear link between societal cleavages and political parties. The group-based politics with parties representing specific groups like the working class or members of religious denominations is now believed to have become less important. Secularization, tertialization, mediatization, and individualization have led to a decline of structural and