

> N°03/2016

Concepts of Congruence
and European's evaluation
of representation.
A micro-level-analysis

> Mirjam Dageförde



N° 03/2016

March 2016

Mirjam Dageförde

Concepts of Congruence and European's evaluation of representation. A micro-level-analysis

Mirjam Dageförde is PhD-candidate at Sciences Po (Centre d'études européennes) and at the University of Stuttgart (Cotutelle). Her research interests concern the relation of citizens and politics, approaches for evaluating representation and methods. Her work focuses on Europe as well as on the French-German comparison. Currently, she teaches on representation and quantitative methods at Sciences Po. E-Mail: mirjam.dagefoerde@sciencespo.fr

This working paper is based on two different papers that investigate the effects of congruence on the macro-and micro-level. The papers were presented at the APSA Annual Meeting 2013 and the ECPR General conference 2013 (macro) and at the APSA Annual Meeting 2014 and the ECPR General conference 2014 (micro) as well as colloquia/seminars at Sciences Po, the University of Stuttgart and the University of Twente. I would like to thank the participants of the panels and colloquia and Kees Aarts, James Adams, Matt Golder, Armen Hakhverdian, Orit Kedar, Pablo Onate and Jacques Thomassen. Moreover, I thank Oscar Gabriel, Emiliano Grossman, Nonna Mayer and Nicolas Sauger.

Citation: Mirjam Dageförde (2016), "Concepts of Congruence and European's evaluation of representation. A micro-level-analysis", Les Cahiers européens de Sciences Po, n°3, Paris: Centre d'études européennes at Sciences Po.

Abstract

(EN) The analysis of the relation between citizens and politics is mostly conducted from two different perspectives and disciplines: On the one hand, legislative scholars analyse legislative behaviour or evaluate representation in terms of responsiveness or congruence. On the other hand, public opinion research focuses mainly on analyses of political trust or satisfaction with democracy for assessing citizens' perspective. To a minor degree, both disciplines are combined: In the last decades, legislative research neglected the perspective of citizens, and public opinion research referred only rarely to theories that concern representation at its core. This article aims at closing this research gap and addresses citizens' evaluation of representation. It investigates the effects of congruence – as the main indicator for judging about the quality of representation – from a *micro-perspective* while referring to the underlying assumption: The higher the congruence, the better the quality of representation. It (1) develops new models for conceptualizing congruence on the micro-level, (2) analyses how citizens assess parliamentary representation in terms of perceived responsiveness and (3) explores how different concepts of congruence impact on it. The analysis is drawn for the EU countries. The results indicate that the distinct conceptualizations of congruence are of varying importance for explaining citizens' representational judgments.

Keywords: representation, congruence, political parties, citizens' attitudes

(FR) L'analyse de la relation entre citoyens et politique est effectuée selon deux perspectives différentes. D'une part, la recherche sur la représentation analyse les attitudes et les comportements des représentants et évalue la représentation en termes de la congruence ou de capacité de réponse. D'autre part, la recherche sur l'opinion publique s'intéresse à la confiance dans la politique et la satisfaction avec la démocratie afin d'analyser la perspective des citoyens. Ainsi l'objectif de l'article est de faire dialoguer les théories sur la qualité de la représentation et l'étude de l'opinion publique.

Je soutiens que - en dépit des modèles d'évaluation « objectifs » - il est nécessaire d'analyser la qualité de la représentation politique d'un point de vue subjectif, c'est-à-dire dans la perception qu'en ont les citoyens. Dans la littérature encore relativement récente sur la congruence, l'article s'efforce de construire de nouveaux indicateurs de ce lien de représentation, en prenant en compte la diversité des intérêts représentés et la diversité des représentants. A cette fin, l'article procède à une discussion de l'approche théorique de la congruence. Jusqu'à maintenant, *il y a des conceptions distinctes* de la congruence idéologique au niveau macro, mais *une conception unique au niveau individuel*. Afin d'explorer les effets de la congruence idéologique entre les acteurs politiques et les citoyens, je développe des nouvelles conceptions au niveau micro qui tiennent en compte (a) de la distance entre des partis politiques et les citoyens, (b) de la force des partis et (c) de la structure de la compétition politique. Je teste ainsi l'hypothèse structurante de la théorie de la congruence : plus grande est la congruence, meilleure est la qualité de la représentation. Les résultats indiquent que des conceptions de la congruence au niveau micro ont une importance significative pour expliquer les jugements des citoyens sur la représentation politique.

Mots clés : représentation, congruence, parties politiques, citoyens

1. Introduction

Recently, the concept of congruence is applied continuously as a means for evaluating representation, whereas the implicit assumption is: The higher the congruence between political actors and the electorate, the better representation works. The initial design was established by Miller and Stokes (1963) who measured policy-congruence between US-Congressmen and their constituencies. The design was adapted in a plethora of studies, mostly applying the left-right scale instead of policy-positions. In the last decade the impact of electoral systems on congruence was the most relevant topic (Huber and Powell, 1994, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Blais and Bodet, 2006, Powell, 2006, Budge and McDonald, 2007, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012a, Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012b). Above all, scholars investigated the effects of proportional and majoritarian electoral systems on congruence and hypothesized distinct effects. However, on the contrary to earlier findings, recent studies prove that electoral systems have margin impact on congruence (e.g. Powell 2009; Golder and Stramski 2010).

Despite of testing new models to explain congruence (Belchior, 2012) and methodological advancements (Blais and Aarts, 2006, Golder and Stramski, 2010), there is lack of exploring the *effect* of ideological congruence. Hence, this paper refers to the underlying assumption of the concept and tests the normative statement (the higher the congruence, the better representation works) empirically. In doing so, congruence is related to the evaluation of representation made by those who get represented – the citizens, as their perceptions of representation are a crucial characteristic of democratic governance (Dahl, 1971). An in-depth investigation of the quality of political representation from the citizens' perspective is a desideratum of empirical research, since measures of the quality of representative democracy are also important to political processes if they are linked to the citizens' attitudes and behaviours. From a normative as well as empirical point of view, a well working representative democracy presupposes that citizens evaluate representation positively. While the structure, development and determinants of citizens' support of and trust in political institutions and actors in modern democracies have broadly been investigated (for example: Norris 2011; Zmerli and Hooghe 2011) research on representation has been more limited.

Aiming to investigate effects of congruence leads to consider a methodological discussion as the applied models for gaining information about congruence become more sophisticated. The common method for the analysis of congruence was to compare positions of parties, parliament or government with those of median voters. Recently scholars criticise this approach: The mere comparison of government or party positions with the position of the median citizen doesn't

consider the distribution of ideological orientations in an appropriate manner (see e.g. Golder and Stramski 2010). Hence, scholars broaden the analytical perspective and differentiate between distinct measurements on the macro-level. In addition to the macro-perspective, this article contains new conceptualizations and measures of ideological congruence between citizens and parties on the micro-level. In a second step, this article explores the impact of distinct conceptualizations of congruence on perceived parliamentary responsiveness in Europe on the micro-level (results for the relation on the macro-level: see Dageförde 2013). Thus, we gather in-depth knowledge about (1) citizens' evaluation of representation (2) conceptualisations of congruence on the micro-level, and (3) how distinct models of congruence relate to perceived responsiveness among the European citizenry.

2. Concepts of ideological congruence on the micro-level and perceived responsiveness

In her famous monograph *The concept of representation*, Hanna Pitkin (1967: 8f.) provided the most influential definition of representation as the “making present of something that is literally absent”. For assessing the quality of representation – or in Pitkin's terms: whether the representational agents act in the interest of the represented and reflect their interests – scholars developed diversified doctrines. Above all, they refer to the substance of representation, applying the concept of congruence or investigate responsiveness. In order to study congruence, the accordance between policy preferences or ideological orientations of citizens and political actors is examined (Miller and Stokes, 1963, Achen, 1978, Powell, 2009, Huber and Powell, 1994, Kim et al., 2010, Blais and Bodet, 2006, Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012b). Focusing on a different angle, analyses of responsiveness explore the extent to which political elites consider the interests of the represented in the process of decision-making and in terms of policy-outcomes (Powell, 2004, Wlezien, 2005, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Wlezien and Soroka, 2012).

The relevance of both approaches is uncontroversial: Whereas in democratic theory, congruence is only one “democratic virtue” (Huber and Powell 1994: 292) among others, in research on representation it is the “normal standard for judging the representativeness of a democratic system” (Dalton 2002: 217; for a critical discussion see Rohrschneider 2005: 851). Or, as Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2012b: 87) assume: “ideological agreement, or lack thereof, provides a useful way to assess the quality of democratic representation-through-parties”. On the other hand, Dahl stresses the importance of responsiveness arguing that “a key

characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens" (Dahl 1971: 1). Although it is impossible to reach perfect responsiveness, he emphasizes that the latter might serve as an ideal. The same occurs with regard to congruence (Andeweg, 2011).

The theoretical relation of these elements assumes a mechanism which proceeds as follows: ideological congruence means that the positions between citizens and political actors (in the European context: political parties) are similar. Hence, there is a general agreement between parties and voters with regard to their "ideas about how society should work" (Almond 1978: 176). Parliamentary parties or representatives are thus supposed to act in the interest of the represented when it comes to deliberation (rhetorical responsiveness) and the process of policy-making (effective responsiveness; cf. for example Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008). Hence, higher congruence leads to improved responsiveness (Powell, 2004, Whitefield, 2006, Lefkofridi et al., 2012). Consequently, the assumption mentioned above has to be refined: Higher congruence leads to improved responsiveness and thereby to higher quality of (substantive) representation in terms of perceived parliamentary responsiveness.

Subsequent research dealt with civic attitudes to parliaments, governments, parties, members of parties and politicians in general (Patterson et al., 1975, Patterson et al., 1992, Herrera et al., 1992, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 20

01, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002, Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995, Nye et al., 1997, Pharr and Putnam, 2000, Dalton, 2004, Dalton, 2006, Norris, 1999, Norris, 2011). In this context, scholars use measures of political trust to account for proximity or distance between citizens and parliament or a political system (Costa et al., 2012, Saalfeld and Dobmeier, 2012) or to investigate citizens' satisfaction with democracy (Hobolt, 2012, Brandenburg and Johns, 2014, Dahlberg and Holmberg, 2014, Reher, 2015). However, these indicators encompass larger theoretical concepts and are thus not adequate when researching on representation and citizens' representational judgments (Rohrschneider 2005: 854). The goal of this paper is to investigate the subjective point of view, to adopt the perspective of the citizen, the "ultimate principal" (Strøm, 2000), while using novel and more accurate measures of congruence.

2.1. Conceptualizing and measuring ideological congruence on the individual level

To analyse the quality of parliamentary representation in terms of congruence, ideological agreement between political actors and citizens can be conceptualized distinctly. Golder and Stramski (2010) broadened the analytical perspective on congruence on the macro-level and identified distinct measures to overcome the median as the main and often only point of reference. The crucial argument was that the mere comparison of government or party positions and the position of the median citizen does not reflect the distribution of ideological orientations appropriately. It is necessary to conceptualize congruence in a variety of ways: diverse conceptualisations are discussed, as e.g. absolute and relative modes. Moreover, Golder and Stramski (2010) make a difference between a many-to-one relationship and a many-to-many-relationship. The many-to-one-relationship compares the position of voters to the position of the government, a party or an MP, whereas many-to-many-relationships compares the position of voters to those of an assembly as a whole. The authors conceptualize congruence as a many-to-many relationship aiming to show “how congruent the positions of representatives [or political actors] in the legislature are with the substantive preferences of the citizens” (Golder and Stramski 2010: 96).

Referring to Pitkin (1967), Andeweg (2011: 40) points out that “representation should not be seen as an activity of individual actors, but rather as a systemic property that results from all actors' behaviour. In that perspective, we should not try to measure congruence between voters and particular representatives or parties, but between the electorate as a whole and parliament as a whole.” In sum, these diverse measures broaden the perspective e.g. for measuring congruence between MPs and their constituents or for exploring the relation of parties to their affiliates. Especially in the European context, political parties became more important representational agents than MPs as citizens' interests are not divided by geographical boundaries (linking MPs and their constituencies), but aggregated by interest groups or political parties (Weissberg, 1978, Thomassen, 1994). Consequently, the following section focuses on the ideological agreement between citizens and parties.

So far, the methodological criticism is not acknowledged for conceptualizing congruence at the micro-level. The concept is widely neglected by scholars in the research field of public opinion; legislative scholars rarely apply micro-level analyses. In order to fill this gap, the following section models congruence between citizens and parties on the individual level in different ways. On the one hand, the models take into account the distribution of political parties on the left-right scale and refer it to each citizen's position. On the other hand, they refer to the strength of

political parties in each national assembly. Due to these diverging conceptualizations, measures of congruence between citizens and parliamentary parties will lead to distinct results. Moreover, their correlation to perceived responsiveness might differ.

As mentioned above, the vast majority of the analyses of congruence refer to the median position of voters, parties, MPs etc. Mostly, it (1) is applied to identify the median position of citizens and (2) is compared to the position of MPs or parties, considering the electoral system or party system features. However, this article focuses on congruence between citizens and political parties while using novel measures. To assess the effects of congruence between citizens and parties on the individual level, the aim is to compare the positions of parliamentary political parties with the position of each citizen individually. Consequently, congruence increases with the nearness of citizen *i*’s position to the median position of all parliamentary political parties.

(1) median-congruence

$$= |(citizen i - median parliamentary parties)|$$

Recently, new concepts for analysing congruence on the aggregate level have emerged. Here, scholars have attempted to “overcome the median” (Blais and Bodet, 2006, Golder and Stramski, 2010). Similar criticism appeared with regard to the conceptualization of ideological agreement between citizens and parties at the micro-level: the mere reference to the median party position does not take into account the distribution of political parties along the ideological scale in any detail. A two-party system with parties that are close to each other and at the middle of the ideological scale might lead to the same score as a multi-party system in which the political parties are distributed broadly over the ideological scale. Taking into account this criticism, the *nearest party-congruence* depicts the distance between citizen *i* and the parliamentary party *j* which is nearest to the citizen’s position.¹ In this case, the degree of congruence increases with the nearness of citizen *i* to a parliamentary party.

(2) nearest party-congruence

$$= \min |(citizen i - party j)|$$

¹See recently: Brandenburg and Johns (2014) for further discussion of left-right distance.

However, with regard to representation, not only the mere existence of a parliamentary party might matter for citizens’ assessment of the quality of representation. From an individual perspective, the strength of a parliamentary party may be another relevant aspect to consider if one aims to explore congruence. Golder and Stramski (2010), as well as Andeweg (2011), highlight the necessity to integrate the strength of parties into the calculation of congruence at the aggregate level. Their aim is to investigate whether a legislature responds to the interests of citizens by analysing whether the distribution of ideological positions among the citizenry is in accordance with the strength of distinct parliamentary parties (representing different ideological orientations) in the assembly. If one aims at conceptualizing congruence between citizens and parties at the individual level, the theoretical argument – and thus the operationalization – differs slightly.

If congruence describes the quality of representation from an individual point of view, the assumption of nearest party*strength-congruence is that the quality of representation increases if the party that is near to citizen *i* has a large seat-share, i.e. power: a strong parliamentary party has better opportunities to represent its positions in political debates, but also to influence decision-making². In mathematical terms, this argument enriches the mere analysis of distance between a party and citizen *i* with a weighting component that refers to the seatshare of the corresponding (nearest) party. In this case, congruence increases with (a) the nearness of citizen *i* to a political party *j* and (b) the strength of this party *j*. Again, lower values indicate higher levels of congruence.

$$(3) \text{ nearest party * strength-congruence}$$

$$= \min |(citizen i - party j)| * \left(\frac{1}{strength party j} \right)$$

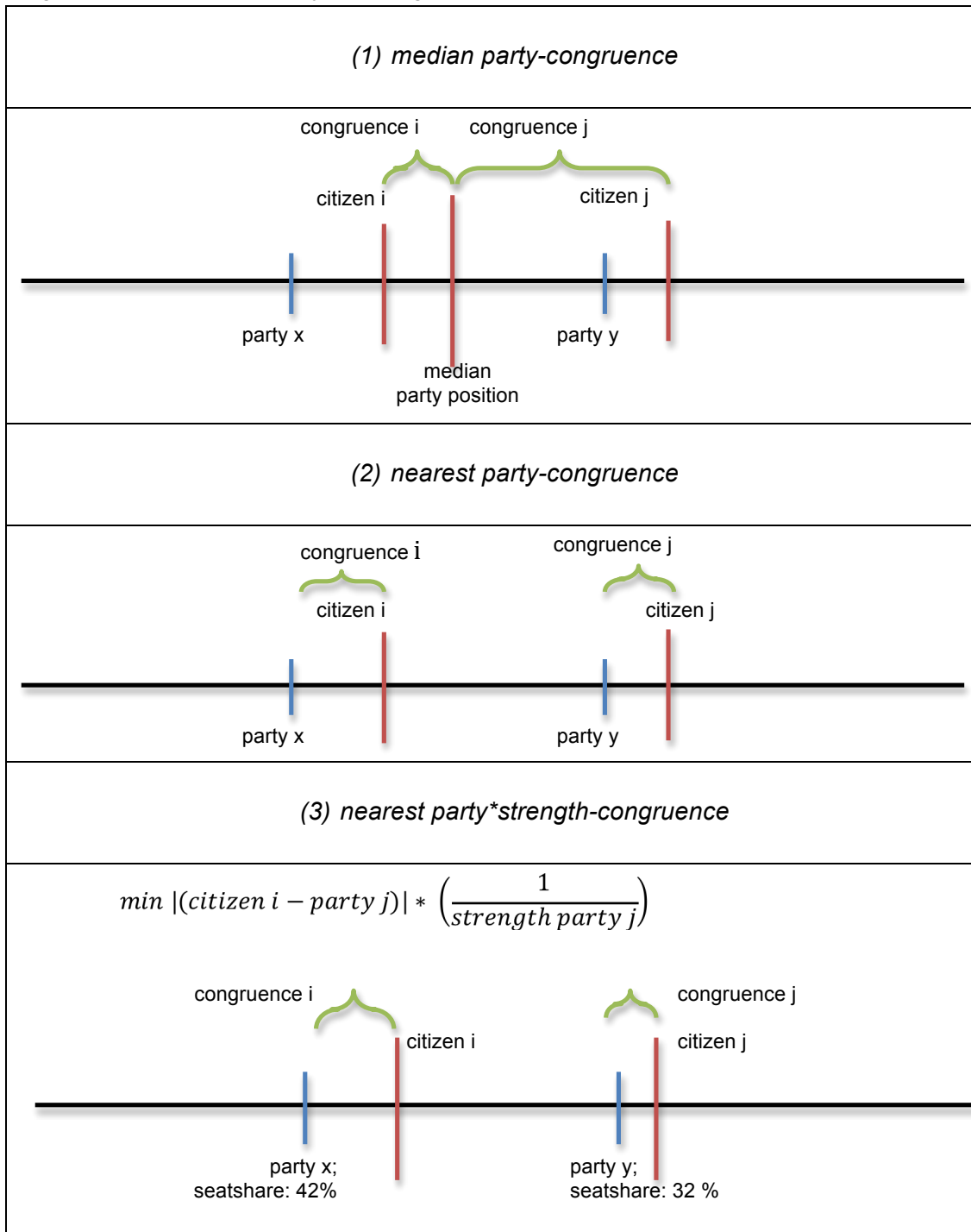
Figure 1 illustrates the distinct conceptualizations of ideological congruence between citizens and parties in a hypothetical two-party system.

Obviously, the first conceptualization of *median party-congruence* accounts less for the distance between citizen *i* and a particular political party. As this measure compares citizens’ ideological position with the position of the median party position, congruence accounts less for the factual

² For an in-depth study concerning the distinction between rhetorical and effective responsiveness see e.g. Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008

distribution of political parties on the left-right scale. To the contrary, *nearest party-congruence* describes the distance between citizen i and the nearness of a particular political party j to citizen's position on the left-right scale. Hence, it accounts more precisely for the distribution of political parties on the ideological scale. Finally, *nearest party*strength-congruence* builds on this idea as well. However, by considering the strength of a given parliamentary party the calculation changes. Congruence is higher if the distance between citizens and parties is low. Beyond, congruence is mediated by the seatshare of a parliamentary party. According to this measure, congruence increases not only with the nearness to a party, but also with its strength.

Figure 1: Concepts of party-voter-agreement on the individual level



Source: own illustration.

2.2. Conceptualizations of congruence and their interrelation to perceived responsiveness

The main assumption of congruence – the higher the congruence, the better the quality of representation – leads to the hypothesis, that higher degrees of congruence relate to more positive representational judgments of the citizenry. The relation under investigation refers to an assumed psychological mechanism with egotropic and sociotropic judgments of citizens: Modes of congruence on the *micro-level* and perceived parliamentary responsiveness with regard to the interests of the *whole citizenry*. As illustrated above, the different concepts of congruence vary in their specificity. Consequently, the assumed effects of ideological congruence on perceived parliamentary responsiveness might differ, too.

The median is a mathematical construct, generated through considering the distribution of all parliamentary parties in a national assembly. Hence, the calculation of a median-score is very demanding and thus not very likely to occur. Consequently, it is assumed that median-congruence is not a main category of reference in the mind of an individual and consequently not a strong predictor of perceived responsiveness. To the contrary, nearest-party congruence accounts for the nearness of a given citizen to the parliamentary party which is nearest to the own position. Given the assumed interrelation between congruence and responsiveness, it can be assumed that this conceptualisation is more relevant for citizens' judgments about parliamentary responsiveness than median-congruence.

However, the positive effects of being near to a political party might enforce if this party has a large seatshare in parliament and thus comparatively much power. As a consequence, the party has better opportunities to represent its positions in political debates but also in concrete decision-making. The position of citizen *i* is better, and more strongly, represented. Thus, we assume that nearest party*strength-congruence has stronger positive effects on perceived parliamentary responsiveness than nearest-party congruence.

Table 1 illustrates the assumed strength of correlation between distinct concepts of congruence and perceived responsiveness.

Table 1: Conceptualizations of congruence and assumed correlation to perceived responsiveness

Concept of congruence on the individual level	Assumed correlation to perceived parliamentary responsiveness
(1) median-congruence	+
(2) nearest party-congruence	++
(3) nearest party*strength-congruence	+++

3. Data and Methods

The data is drawn from the European Election Study, CSES-data and ParlGov. These sources serve as a basis for an original dataset. As this article seeks to investigate ideological agreement and its effects on the micro-level, the subsequent analysis follows the approach of subjective congruence. Here, citizens place themselves on the ideological scale and position parliamentary parties on the same scale (Powell, 2009). The individual data is driven from the European Election Study 2009, the sample size for each country varies between 1.000 and 1.020.

Information on ideological positions of parties and citizens is captured by two questions:

- “In political matters people talk of “the left” and “the right”. What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means “left” and 10 means “right”. Which number best describes your position?”
- “And about where would you place the following parties on this scale? How about the (Party X)? Which number from 0 to 10, where 0 means “left” and 10 means “right” best describes (Party X)?”

Moreover, the EES contains data on perceived parliamentary responsiveness. The item wording reads as follows:

- “The [national] Parliament takes into consideration the concerns of [country X’s] citizens.
 - Do you ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’?”

4. Descriptive results

The comparison illustrates that Europeans' representational judgments about their national parliament differ considerably: On a 5-point scale "1" indicates that citizens agree strongly with the statement that the national parliament considers the concerns of citizens, "0" indicates that the respondents disagree strongly.

Table 2: Perceived responsiveness of the national parliament, European comparison

Country	N	MEAN	SD
LU	973	0,74	0,22
DK	992	0,71	0,24
NL	993	0,65	0,23
AT	971	0,64	0,26
DE	988	0,64	0,25
IE	991	0,63	0,34
MT	907	0,63	0,26
SE	983	0,61	0,26
UK	992	0,6	0,36
BE	920	0,58	0,27
CY	954	0,57	0,29
FI	990	0,57	0,28
IT	957	0,57	0,28
PT	927	0,57	0,25
ES	966	0,55	0,28
FR	975	0,53	0,33
SI	976	0,5	0,27
SK	975	0,46	0,28
CZ	983	0,45	0,28
RO	938	0,45	0,3
PL	956	0,44	0,28
EE	970	0,41	0,29
BG	960	0,36	0,29
HU	980	0,36	0,27
EL	985	0,35	0,31
LT	967	0,28	0,27
LV	973	0,26	0,26

Source: European Election Study, 2009.
Coding: 5-point scale 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = strongly agree; weighted results.

The mean-scores vary between 0.74 and 0.25 among the European countries indicating variance with regard to Europeans’ representational judgments. Whereas the Luxembourgian citizenry judges mostly positive about the representational task of their national parliament, the majority of Latvian citizens states that the parliament is not up to its task. In sum, the European citizens tend to evaluate their national parliaments more positive than negative, as the majority of mean scores above 0.5 indicates.

However, the results illustrate some patterns: apparently, perceived parliamentary responsiveness is higher in West- and North-European countries than in some parts of Eastern and Southern Europe (except Greece). In most of the East-European countries, citizens tend to evaluate the task of national parliaments negatively. Hence, especially in Eastern Europe, citizens hold sceptical attitudes towards the functioning of parliamentary representation.

5. Does congruence affect perceived responsiveness? An analysis of micro-effects

Whether empirical investigation supports the assumed interrelations between the distinct concepts of ideological congruence on the individual level and perceived responsiveness is illustrated in table 3. The analysis contains distinct models to obtain a more detailed picture of the assumed mechanisms. Model 1 concerns all respondents. Model 2 separates Eastern and Western Europe (see e.g. Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012b). Model 3 conducts an analysis for the most sophisticated part of European citizens (e.g. Converse, 1964, Sniderman et al., 1991, Zaller, 1992).

Table 3: Ordered Logit-Regression models, concepts of cogruence on the individual level and perceived responsiveness in Europe

	Model 1	Model 2		Model 3
	all respondents	East	West	sophisticated
	b	b	b	b
median-congruence	-.0294***		-.0182***	-.0168***
nearest-party congruence	-.0529***	.0580*		-.0540***
nearest party*strength-congruence	-.0353***	-.0374***	-.0612***	-.0297***
N	21.748	7.266	14.482	11.038

Levels of significance: *=p<0,05; **=p<0,01; ***=p<0,001; only significant results are listed.

Source: ESS, CSES, ParlGov, own database; 2009

Negative coefficients confirm the assumed mechanism as a higher distance or a higher number of the measure indicates a decrease in congruence.

The results confirm some of the assumed correlations, but there are some non-confirmatory findings as well. Mainly, the results confirm the hypothesis that median-congruence correlates less strongly with perceived responsiveness than the other concepts of congruence. In the case of Eastern Europe, the coefficients of median-congruence are not significant. Besides, it is the weakest predictor of the other models.

The findings indicate diverse results with regard to the impact of nearest-party and nearest party*strength-congruence on perceived responsiveness. According to the hypotheses above, the latter should have the strongest impact on perceived responsiveness. Indeed, the model for Western Europe confirms this hypothesis. But in most cases, nearest party-congruence is the strongest predictor.

In sum, the impact of ideological congruence on perceived responsiveness differs (a) between the citizenry of Eastern and Western Europe and (b) to a minor extent between sophisticated citizens and all European citizens. However, the preliminary results indicate that this correlation is not very strong. Except of one case, the results confirm the assumed mechanism: increasing congruence is related to an increase of perceived responsiveness.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore citizens' evaluation of representation. In the first section, this article discussed the most commonly used measures to account for the quality of representation: congruence and responsiveness. Second, it emphasized the need to integrate a subjective perspective into the research field and the importance of considering citizens' perceptions of representation.

Referring to the recent methodological discussion about congruence on the macro-level, the need for conceptualizing congruence between parties and citizens on the individual was highlighted. Subsequently, new concepts of congruence on the micro-level were introduced: median party-congruence, nearest party-congruence and nearest party*strength-congruence. All of them model the relation between citizens and parliamentary parties but vary with regard to their theoretical approach. In a next step, the article discussed the interrelation of these distinct conceptualizations with perceived responsiveness. At this, it was hypothesised that the relevance of these models increases with their specificity.

Empirical investigation illustrated that (1) judgments about parliamentary responsiveness differ considerably among the European citizenry and that (2) the impact of distinct concepts of congruence on perceived responsiveness varies slightly. Except for one case, the correlations confirm the assumed mechanism: increasing congruence is related to an increase of perceived responsiveness, even though the strength of this increase is limited. The largest difference occurs when distinguishing between the East- and West-European citizenry.

However, the results might stimulate further explorations of the effects of congruence as a mix of micro- and macro-conceptualizations and to consider institutional settings. This study draws attention to the fact that there is a wide research gap concerning the analysis of citizens' evaluation of representation and factors that improve their judgement. Mostly, citizens' attitudes are explained through considering individual and psychological factors. But still there is little knowledge about citizens' demands towards and their perceptions of political representation – be it substantive or procedural – which are important aspects for evaluating political representation in a subjective manner.

Literature

- ACHEN, C. H. 1978. Measuring Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 22, 475-510.
- ANDEWEG, R. B. 2011. Approaching Perfect Policy Congruence: Measurement, Development, and Relevance for Political Representation. In: ROSEMA, M., DENTERS, B. & AARTS, K. (eds.) *Political Representation and Policy Congruence in Modern Societies*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- BELCHIOR, A. M. 2012. Explaining Left-Right Party Congruence Across European Party Systems: A Test of Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Level Models. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46, 352-386.
- BLAIS, A. & AARTS, K. 2006. Electoral Systems and Turnout. *Acta Politica*, 41, 180-196.
- BLAIS, A. & BODET, M. A. 2006. Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policy Makers? *Comparative Political Studies*, 39, 1243-1262.
- BRANDENBURG, H. & JOHNS, R. 2014. The Declining Representativeness of the British Party System, and Why it Matters. *Political Studies*, 62, 704-725.
- BUDGE, I. & MCDONALD, M. D. 2007. Election and party system effects on policy representation: Bringing time into a comparative perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 26, 168-179.
- CONVERSE, P. E. 1964. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In: APTER, D. (ed.) *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- COSTA, O., LEFÉBURE, P., ROZENBERG, O., SCHNATTERER, T. & KERROUCHE, E. 2012. Far Away, So Close: Parliament and Citizens in France. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 18, 294-313.
- DAGEFÖRDE, M. 2013. Exploring the Effects of Congruence: Party-Voter Agreement and Citizens Evaluation of Representation. *APSA Annual Meeting*. Chicago.
- DAHL, R. E. 1971. *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition.*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press.
- DAHLBERG, S. & HOLMBERG, S. 2014. Democracy and Bureaucracy: How their Quality Matters for Popular Satisfaction. *West European Politics*, 37, 515-537.
- DALTON, R. J. 2004. *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in advanced Industrial Democracies.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DALTON, R. J. 2006. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Washington, DC, CQ Press.
- GOLDER, M. & STRAMSKI, J. 2010. Ideological Congruence and Electoral Institutions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54, 90-106.
- HERRERA, C. L., HERRERA, R. & SMITH, E. R. A. N. 1992. Public Opinion and Congressional Representation. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 56, 185-205.
- HIBBING, J. R. & THEISS-MORSE, E. 1995. *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes toward American Political Institutions.*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- HIBBING, J. R. & THEISS-MORSE, E. 2001. Process Preferences and American Politics: What the People Want Government to Be. *The American Political Science Review*, 95, 145-153.
- HIBBING, J. R. & THEISS-MORSE, E. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HOBOLT, S. B. 2012. Citizen Satisfaction with Democracy in the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50, 88-105.
- HOBOLT, S. B. & KLEMMENSEN, R. 2008. Government Responsiveness and Political Competition in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 309-337.
- HUBER, J. D. & POWELL, G. B. 1994. Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in two Visions of Liberal Democracy. *World Politics*, 46, 291-326.
- KIM, H., POWELL, G. B. & FORDING, R. C. 2010. Electoral Systems, Party Systems, and Ideological Representation. *Comparative Politics* 42, 1-19.
- KLINGEMANN, H.-D. & FUCHS, D. 1995. *Citizens and the State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- LEFKOFRIDI, Z., GIGER, N. & KISSAU, K. 2012. Inequality and Respresentation in Europe. *Representation*, 48, 1-11.
- MILLER, W. E. & STOKES, D. E. 1963. Constituency Influence in Congress. *American Political Science Review*, 57, 45-56.
- NORRIS, P. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- NORRIS, P. 2011. *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited.*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- NYE, J. S., ZELIKOW, P. D. & KING, D. C. 1997. *Why people don't trust Government*, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press.
- PATTERSON, S. C., HEDLUND, R. D. & BOYNTON, R. 1975. *Representatives and Represented: Bases of Public Support for the American Legislatures*, New York, John C. Wahlke Wiley.
- PATTERSON, S. C., RIPLEY, R. B. & QUINLAN, S. V. 1992. Citizens' Orientations toward Legislatures: Congress and the State Legislature. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 45, 315-338.
- PHARR, S. J. & PUTNAM, R. D. 2000. *Disaffected Democracies. What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- PITKIN, H. F. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- POWELL, G. B. 2004. The Chain of Responsiveness. *Journal of Democracy*, 15, 91-105.
- POWELL, G. B. 2006. Election Laws and Representative Governments: Beyond Votes and Seats. *British Journal of Political Science*, 36, 291-315.
- POWELL, G. B. 2009. The Ideological Congruence Controversy: The Impact of Alternative Measures, Data, and Time Periods on the Effects of Election Rules. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42, 1475-1497.

- POWELL, G. B. & VANBERG, G. S. 2000. Election Laws, Disproportionality and Median Correspondence: Implications for Two Visions of Democracy. *British Journal of Political Science*, 30, 383-411.
- REHER, S. 2015. Explaining cross-national variation in the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54, 160-181.
- ROHRSCHEIDER, R. & WHITEFIELD, S. 2012a. Institutional Context and Representational Strain in Party–Voter Agreement in Western and Eastern Europe. *West European Politics*, 35, 1320-1340.
- ROHRSCHEIDER, R. & WHITEFIELD, S. 2012b. *The Strain of Representation: How Parties Represent Diverse Voters in Western and Eastern Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- SAALFELD, T. & DOBMEIER, R. 2012. The Bundestag and German Citizens: More Communication, Growing Distance. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 18, 314-333.
- SNIDERMAN, P. M., BRODY, R. A. & TETLOCK, P. E. 1991. *Reasoning and choice: Explorations in political psychology.*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- STRØM, K. 2000. Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies. *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 261-289.
- THOMASSEN, J. 1994. Empirical Research into Political Representation: Failing Democracy or Failing Models? In: JENNINGS, M. K. & MANN, T. E. (eds.) *Elections at Home and Abroad*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- WEISSBERG, R. 1978. Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress. *American Political Science Review*, 72, 535-547.
- WHITEFIELD, S. 2006. Mind the Representation Gap: Explaining Differences in Public Views of Representation in Postcommunist Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39, 733-758.
- WLEZIEN, C. 2005. On the salience of political issues: The problem with 'most important problem'. *Electoral Studies*, 24, 555-579.
- WLEZIEN, C. & SOROKA, S. N. 2012. Political Institutions and the Opinion–Policy Link. *West European Politics*, 35, 1407-1432.
- ZALLER, J. R. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

