Understanding Constituency Representation in the European Parliament

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses an important aspect of political representation in the context of the European Union's elected institution, the European Parliament. Our focus of attention is the 'active' representation of constituent interests. This is a crucial dimension of the representative process, but one about which our knowledge remains under-developed. We argue that study of this phenomenon in the European context may both inform us about important aspects of representatives' behaviour in the EU, and in addition permit insights into the forms of, and motivations behind, constituency representation that are of wider theoretical importance. We outline a research design, incorporating cross-national and cross-temporal components, which offers the potential to advance beyond limitations inherent to previous research in this area. Then, drawing on a recent survey of European Parliament members, we present some initial results from the cross-national elements of our work. The results reinforce the need for further investigation of potential structural, cultural and individual motivations behind patterns of constituency representation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Few words have been more pervasive in recent literature on the European Union (EU) than 'democracy'. A wide variety of work has pointed to ways in which the Union might be considered undemocratic, insufficiently democratic, or at least to possess poorly functioning democratic procedures. An important normative literature on the EU has developed, evaluating and critiquing the Union in relation to established models and criteria of democratic governance (Weiler 1999; Beetham and Lord 1998; Chryssochoou 1998; Bellamy and Castiglione 1996). The most obvious manifestation of representative democracy in the Union, elections to the European Parliament (EP) have also been extensively analysed, and generally found wanting as means of connecting the people(s) to the exercise of power at the European level (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson 1998). And growing evidence of public criticism of, and even active antagonism towards, the Union as a centre of public authority has been a key finding within the rapidly developing body of work devoted to understanding public opinion on the EU (Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Gabel 1998; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993).

A further important aspect of understanding democracy in the European Union is the development of our knowledge about those representative institutions – imperfect though they may be – that do exist in the EU. Here, and despite the rapid development of the study of the elected European Parliament (EP) in recent times, our knowledge still lags somewhat behind. We now know quite a lot about European elections; in most respects we still know rather less about the continuing process of political representation that follows in the wake of those elections. This is unfortunate, for two reasons. The first relates to the substantial and widely recognised growth in the powers and influence of the elected EP: very simply, given that the parliament as a representative and policy-shaping institution now matters far more than it used to, we need to understand more about it. The second reason is that the study of representation in this chamber has the potential to generate significant insights of general theoretical interest to political science. European Election studies have developed powerful comparative research designs around the multi-national EP.[1] As we explain in this paper, the EP can offer similarly valuable insights to those interested in other aspects of political representation, including the focus of our work, the process of 'constituency representation'.

This paper is the first in a broader project examining constituency representation in the European Union.[2] Here, we aim to accomplish the following tasks:

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[1] See van der Eijk et al (1996).

[2] As described later on, this project includes an intensive study of 'Electoral Reform, Parliamentary Representation and the British MEP', funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant Ref: R000239231)..

1. To review what is currently known about constituency representation within the more general literature on democratic political representation, and thereby identify why important questions concerning this process remain unanswered;

2. To outline a research design, incorporating both cross-national and cross-temporal components, that allows us to address these questions by offering greater insight into potential structural, cultural and individual sources of variation in representatives' behaviour; and

3. To present some initial findings and anticipate the future direction of our research.

We begin, in the next section, with a discussion of why 'constituency representation' matters, and what is currently known about it.

2. UNDERSTANDING CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATION

2.1 Why it Matters: Representation is inherent to the practice of democracy, and the need for effective structures and practices of representation is central to a functioning democratic political system (Dahl, 1971; Judge 1999). In the absence of such structures and practices, the efficacy of democracy becomes questionable (Putnam 1993; Verba et al. 1995). But what makes for these effective structures and practices of representation is the moot point, debated since at least the time of Plato. Among the most important features of a well-functioning democratic society that political scientists have identified are: the general 'political culture' of a state (Almond and Verba 1963); more specific notions of the 'social capital' of a country/society (Putnam 1993); and institutional arrangements of many sorts, including the number and powers of a systems' legislative chambers (Tsebelis and Money 1997), and whether the system as a whole is based on 'presidential' or 'parliamentary'-type structures (Linz 1994).

Elections, however, remain a core concern to virtually all conceptions of representative democracy. But what is it about the electoral process that is so important? One element is purely symbolic – the people giving their consent through the casting of votes for representatives. Another, arguably more substantial aspect of elections is the 'representativeness' of their outcomes: is the 'voice of the people' being heard accurately? Here, electoral systems often loom large in considerations (Katz 1997; Lijphart 1994), being the mechanism whereby the 'verdict of the people' is converted into the membership of political institutions. Many of the consequences of different systems have become well understood through previous research (Dunleavy et al. 1997). For instance, it has been shown across numerous political contexts that proportional representation electoral systems tend to produce more 'representative' parliaments as regards the social characteristics and policies of their members (Farrell

2001), and in terms of the 'opinion congruence' between representatives and voters (Huber and Powell 1994).

Electoral systems, however, can have further and possibly more far-reaching consequences for political representation. Their effects will generally extend beyond simply the 'passive' function of converting votes to seats. In a world of even moderately strategic political actors, electoral systems can and do shape the behaviour of voters, and politicians. The considerable literature on 'Duverger's Law' only makes sense in such a context (see especially Cox 1997) – one in which voters' party choices, and politicians' organisational choices respond to the institutional incentives of the electoral system. Moreover, the impact of an electoral system can be expected to continue to shape the behaviour of representatives after an election. At a minimum, representatives' understandings of who it is they are representing, and of their 're-election constituency' – whose support they will require should they wish to retain electoral office – should be heavily influenced by electoral laws. Realistically, the behaviour of politicians during their time of office can then be expected to adjust to the incentives thus created.

Thus, an electoral system might be regarded as having a damaging impact on the functioning of representative democracy not only through failing to provide an accurate representation of popular preferences, or a good 'match' between the views and characteristics of the people and the politicians. Even if electoral laws translate votes into seats in ways that are highly proportional in partisan terms, and produce an elected chamber comprised of socially-representative and attitudinally-congruent individuals, this does not necessarily guarantee high quality representation for the electorate if the representative relationship is understood in a more active and dynamic sense. One aspect of 'active' representation is the degree to which representatives receive and respond to the general views and concerns of those whom they represent.[3] A second aspect of the same general phenomenon is the responsiveness of representatives to more specific grievances and problems: whether there is a commitment by those elected to some form of 'constituency service' – a diverse range of activities generally understood to include the maintenance of personal contacts with, and advancing the concerns and interests of, voters within the geographical region from which the member is elected.

Constituency representation is thus an important part of the representation process. As Fenno (see below) argues, paying greater attention to this aspect of the representation process

> has the net effect of making representation less policy-centred than it usually is... The point is not that policy preferences are not a crucial basis for the representational relationship. They are. The point is that we should not start our studies of representation by assuming that they are the only basis for a representational relationship. They are not (Fenno, 1978:240-41).

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[3] This issue has been extensively explored in literature that has considered the extent to which (following the conceptual basis first laid out by Edmund Burke), representatives consider themselves, or can be viewed by others as, 'delegates', 'trustees' or some combination thereof.

Previous research has suggested that the constituency dimension of representation is highly important to both voters and politicians: that the effective building of links with the electorate may have a direct electoral pay-off for politicians via a 'personal vote'; that the constituency style of legislators can influence voters' understanding of the representative relationship; and that the connection to voters is, for many politicians, central to their role-definition and the organization of their political efforts and resources. An understanding of this dimension of political representation is thus crucial to understanding how representative democracy works. The following section will review in more detail our existing knowledge about constituency representation.

2.2 What We Know: Established knowledge of, and perspectives on, constituency representation is the result of a steady accumulation of research, most of it conducted in the U.S. and British contexts. The inspiration for much subsequent research has been the work of Richard Fenno (1978), who gathered immense amounts of (primarily qualitative-observational) data, in demonstrating the fundamental importance of representatives' 'home styles'. Constituency representation, for Fenno, was not only something that representatives put a great deal of time and effort into; the manner and forms of that representation could tell scholars much about how representatives perceived their constituency and understood the representative relationship:

> [W]e cannot know all we need to know about House members in Washington unless we move out beyond the capitol city into the country and into its congressional districts. Washington and home are different milieus... But they are not unconnected worlds. The theory and practice of a representative form of government links them one to the other. Though a congressman be immersed in one, he remains mindful of the other (Fenno 1978: 214).

Although clearly aware of possible links between 'home-styles' and representatives' behaviour in the chamber, Fenno placed greater emphasis on the electoral implications of constituency representation. The 'electoral connection' angle of constituency representation was then developed further in the work of Cain et al. (1987). An important part of the stimulus for constituency service behaviour, their work suggested, could be the electoral benefits that would accrue to representatives in terms of a 'personal vote'. British MPs and US Congressmen, operating under a Single-Member Plurality (SMP) system, appeared to be motivated in their constituency service activities to a high degree by strategic-electoral considerations of vote-maximization. By making oneself known in a district, and particularly known as someone who worked hard for the interests of the district, both U.S. representatives and, it was suggested, (although to a rather lesser degree) British MPs, could enhance their electoral prospects. The implication was that under different electoral rules, different behaviour would follow from representatives, with constituency representation likely to be downgraded or at least take different forms: 'a polity's electoral process, its policy processes, and the

finer details of its institutional structure are bound together. If one changes the others adjust accordingly' (Cain et al. 1987: 9).

In addition to a considerable body of literature exploring constituency representation further in the U.S. context,[4] other work conducted in the UK has reinforced the finding that constituency representation is increasingly central to the role of British MPs (e.g., Norton and Wood 1993). Some doubt has, however, been cast on the degree to which this behaviour is motivated primarily by vote-winning considerations (Searing, 1994), leading some scholars to term the growing constituency-related activity of most UK MPs 'the puzzle of constituency service' (Norris 1997). Other work conducted in Ireland, however, has found high levels of constituency activity by representatives, and a possible link to the candidate-centred electoral system operating there (Farrell 1985; Wood and Young 1997).[5]

Finally, a very limited body of work has examined constituency representation in the context of the EP. Bowler and Farrell (1993) used evidence from a mail survey of MEPs that indicated a strong empirical relationship between the electoral systems used in EU member states and aspects of MEPs' constituency service behaviour. Where voting is linked to individual candidates rather than parties, such as in Britain with SMP and Ireland with single transferable vote (STV), representatives placed greater emphasis on developing contacts with individual voters via constituency case-work, personal appearances, or maintaining a constituency office. Those elected under PR-list concentrated more on building links with their party machinery and with large-scale organized interests. However, this work was limited in that only a small range of behaviours was examined, not much attention was paid to individual-level variance, and (as acknowledged by the authors) they had little ability to control for factors like political culture (see below) that might offer alternative explanations of apparent electoral systems' effects.

Evidence from the 1994 European Elections Study, however, has led Katz to support the view that cultural factors are rather more important that strategic-electoral considerations promoted directly by an electoral system. Katz therefore concludes that the stronger constituency emphasis among British MEPs compared to their fellows has little to do with electoral systems effects, but rather 'is suggestive of a cultural effect' (1997: 218). In later work, he therefore warns against predicting that electoral reform will generate a mechanistic response from representatives: '"political culture" plays an important part in determining the political consequences of electoral systems; the same institutions may be associated with quite different outcomes if the actors pursue a different mix of objectives' (1999: 16).

2.3 What We Don't Know: The above review has clearly indicated that constituency representation is important. However, in indicating some of the factors that have been associated with it, we have also identified areas of disagreement in the literature and

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[4] For a useful overview, see Smith (2001).

[5] Other work in other contexts: see Chan (1988) on Korea and Hazan on Israel (1999).

aspects about which our knowledge remains far from complete. What remains subject to considerable dispute, however, are the factors that promote greater levels and different forms of constituency service effort from elected representatives. At least three alternative sources of variance are clearly identifiable in extant work in this area:

- *Individual-level*: individual differences in interpretation of the role of representative (e.g. Searing 1994) or in actual or perceived electoral vulnerability (Fenno 1978),[6] are one likely source of variation in the quantity and form of constituency representation.

- *Electoral System*: Broad differences following the strategic-electoral incentives created by an electoral system are a second likely source of variance identified (Cain et al 1987; Bowler and Farrell 1993).

- *Cultural*: General cultural differences across country or region in the expectations and demands placed upon elected representatives are a third source of variance identified (Katz 1997, 1999).

Unfortunately, while previous work has been able to identify these different factors as plausible explanations of variation in constituency service activity, there has been little progress made in understanding when and to what extent each is important. Thus, despite the accumulation of work in this area, some key questions remain essentially unanswered. Is the constituency service phenomenon inherently bound-up in a broader political culture that defines the representative relationship in particular ways, or is such behaviour by politicians primarily driven by individual strategic considerations of maximising their own electoral prospects by seeking a 'personal vote'? How, then, might the behaviour of representatives vary across different electoral systems and political cultures? And how will it respond to electoral reforms that do little to alter the wider political culture, but which do change the strategic incentives facing vote-seeking politicians? Does a change from a candidate-centred electoral system to a party-based from of PR, for instance, improve, worsen or have no impact upon the ability and willingness of politicians to pursue constituency-related work, and the manner in which representatives engage in such activities? The following section of the paper outlines the research design by which we aim to answer these questions.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND HYPOTHESES

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[6] Fenno observes of members of Congress that "their perception of a reelection constituency is fraught with *uncertainty*... House members see electoral uncertainty where outsiders would fail to unearth a single objective indicator of it" (Fenno 1978: 10-11. Emphasis added).

As indicated above, a major problem with much previous research on constituency representation has been that this work has not disentangled individual, strategic-electoral and cultural sources of variance in representatives' behaviour. This failure on the part of previous work has largely *not* been a function of sloppy or incomplete analysis of available data. Rather, the problem has usually been the more fundamental (and intractable) one of limitations in research design. Specific problems have been:

- Research in a single political system (e.g. Fenno 1978; Searing 1994; Norris 1997) and even some comparative analysis (notably Cain et al 1987) is able to examine individual sources of variance in behaviour, such as electoral vulnerability, role choices etc. But such work is generally unable to explore strategic-electoral or cultural influences, because such factors are largely if not wholly constant.

- Cross-national work does open up the possibility of being able to explore cultural and electoral systems variables. However, several factors have often been at play in limiting the conclusions drawn from cross-national comparisons: i. Cross-national work that compared members of different political institutions might be ignoring a further important source of variance – behavioural imperatives in some way imposed upon representatives by the institution itself;[7] ii. Much cross-national work (Bowler and Farrell 1993; Katz 1997), in concentrating on the broader comparative perspective, has ended up paying only limited attention to individual differences; and iii. A fundamental problem has often existed in attempting to disentangle electoral-system effects from cultural ones. Often, the two may appear largely coterminous in particular cases, particularly as in the long-run an electoral system plausibly shapes the broader political culture of a country.

Thus, no research so far has adequately brought together an attention to individual-level factors in addition to cultural and systemic ones, in a powerful research design able to establish strong quasi-control over many key factors. That is what we seek to do in our research. Our aim in this paper is not to fulfil this entire agenda but to begin the process by outlining our research design and presenting some initial results.

Our approach is based first and foremost on the fact that the European Parliament 'provides an opportunity to focus more clearly on differences in attitudes and behaviour among legislators brought about by different electoral systems' (Bowler and Farrell 1993: 50), as well as allowing insights into the impact of individual and

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[7] As Bowler and Farrell observe, "while legislators face electorally-imposed incentives, it is also the case that they face incentives imposed by the chambers in which they work...it is all too easy – especially when comparing across different nations – to forget factors which affect the behaviour of parliamentarians that are more related to the legislature in which they work" (1993: 48-49).

cultural factors. As with the work of the European Election Study team (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), the EP as a cross-national institution is of interest to us not only as a fascinating practical experiment in transnational democracy, but also in that it presents the opportunity for the construction of a powerful cross-national research design, in which broad institutional-level factors can be held relatively constant across different countries and political systems. A second key element of our research design, however, is the electoral system change that occurred in the UK in 1999. The UK switched from electing its MEPs via a SMP system to a regional party (closed) list system, with seats allocated proportionally via the d'Hondt formula. This change is important from the standpoint of research design because it provides a golden opportunity to establish whether, and to what degree, politicians' constituency-related behaviour responds to strategic-electoral incentives.

The core research design can therefore be summarised as:

$$O_{i1} \dots O_j$$

$$X$$

$$O_{i2}$$

(Where O_i to $_j$ = cases, X = 'treatment' i.e., electoral system change in the UK, and $_{i1}$ and $_{i2}$ indicate a 'before and after' measurement).

The detailed aspects of the research design are as follows:

- The cross-sectional/cross-national element is to be based on the analysis of survey data on MEPs from all countries. The major part of the analysis is to be based on data from the 2000 MEP Survey administered by the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG), supplemented by additional analysis of previous survey data gathered by other research teams.[8] Detailed analysis of the survey data gathered will allow us to probe deeply into individual sources of variance in constituency representation alongside systemic and cultural factors.

- The cross-temporal element of our research design, which arises out of the change in the electoral system in UK in 1999, allows for a 'before-and-after' comparison of a precision rarely available to students of politics in advanced

democracies. Holding the wider political context and culture relatively constant, amidst this dramatic reform of the electoral system and the incentives for behaviour promoted by it, will allow for an unusually clear insight into whether constituency activity directly follows strategic incentives, or whether it is rooted more in cultural interpretations that respond only slowly to electoral incentives. This element of our work, which will be based largely on qualitative observational data and other information gathered regarding MEPs' constituency activity, domestic offices etc, and will thus complement perfectly the cross-national aspects of our work.

This section of the paper has outlined the basis for our research. In the following section we present some initial analysis, drawing on data from the EPRG survey of MEPs in the current parliament, which speaks to some aspects of the much broader research agenda that has been suggested.

4. INITIAL EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The aim of this section is not to present definitive findings pertaining to any part of our research design; at this early stage of our research the aim is more simply to present some tentative, initial results that suggest possibilities for further exploration. Our focus here is on the cross-national element of our design, with results presented based on data from the EPRG survey of MEPs. For now we restrict our analysis to some relatively simple cross-tabulations.[9]

The possibilities for cross-national research inherent in the EP are reinforced by Table 1, which reports the variation in electoral system used to elect MEPs across the European Union in 1999.[10] Electoral systems are generally differentiated in terms of how proportional they are, with attention focused on such features as district magnitude and electoral formula. While this may tell us important things about the macro-level consequences of electoral systems, relating to numbers of parties in parliament and the ethnic and gender balance of politicians winning seats, it is less useful for exploring the micro-level effects of electoral systems, in terms of their strategic affects on politicians and voters. The electoral systems used for choosing MEPs differ, as we detail, both by the form of electoral system – now essentially Single Transferable Vote (STV) or some version of list-PR – and also by whether lists are more or less 'closed'. When taken together, these two factors generate considerable scope for analysis that not only allows for individual sources of variation in constituency representation but also electoral system-induced variation, as discussed previously.

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[9] We have deliberately avoided extending our analysis at this stage to any multivariate tests: given the exploratory nature of this work any such analysis could plausibly be criticized for aspiring to a degree of analytical precision that does not currently exist.

[10] Mainland Great Britain, of course, was using regional list-PR for the first time, having changed from single-member district plurality, as discussed earlier in the paper.

In recent years, increasingly, political science attention has shifted to a consideration of the strategic consequences of electoral systems, and here in particular attention is given to the ballot structure as a means of deriving a somewhat different categorization of electoral systems. Figure x suggests one possible typology of electoral systems based on ballot structure characteristics. From Douglas Rae onwards the most common distinction is drawn between categorical and ordinal ballot structures, the latter allowing voters – to varying degrees – the possibility of determining which actual candidates are elected. At one extreme are closed list and SMP systems in which voters have to opt for one or other party (closed list) or candidate (SMP). At the other extreme is STV that allows voters to rank-order all the candidates from all the parties. Open list and ordered (or structured) list provide various ranges in-between the two extremes. Clearly, ordinal systems open up additional possibilities for voters to vote strategically (Bowler and Grofman 2000), although, of course, this is always to the degree that voters can make sufficient sense of the potential available to them to do so. More interesting, for our purposes, are the signals that ordinal systems give to the politicians seeking to hold onto their seats. The inevitable consequence is likely to be greater attention to the personal vote.

For the purposes of further analysis here, we have allocated MEPs to one of two broad categories, 'closed' and 'open' electoral systems (with the UK being treated as an exceptional case, for reasons explained later).[11] One problem with this categoric/ordinal distinction is that it lumps SMP together with closed list systems; yet, it is pretty obvious that there are important differences between these two systems in terms of their affects on politicians' representative roles (e.g. Katz 1980). Politicians working under SMP systems are much more likely than those under closed list systems to feel the need to nurse a personal vote; similarly, voters under SMP systems are much more likely to pay attention to the work of individual politicians. This suggests an alternative distinction based on ballot structure, between candidate-based and party-based electoral systems. As Figure x shows, this produces a different separation between the main types of electoral systems: with closed and ordered list systems on one side of the fence and open list and SMP on the other.

The MEP survey, with a reasonable response rate of 31.8% overall, includes information on 199 members, as outlined in Table 2. Although there are some national differences in response rates, for the most part (the most notable exceptions being Austria and Luxembourg) response rates differ only moderately by country. Table 3 indicates how the respondents break down by our classification of electoral systems.

Tables 4 and 5 present some initial results pertaining to some of the areas of constituency representation that will form the focus of our subsequent work. Table 4 concerns MEPs' contacts with the public. Several different forms of contact are discussed here, including involvement in constituency work, maintenance of an office, and direct questions about weekly contact with different groups of people. Further

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[11] For a fuller discussion of the subtleties of electoral systems, see Farrell (2000).

analysis will be need to consider the nature of the relationship between these different variables. For now, however, simple 'eyeballing' of the overall means does appear to indicate some possible differences between open and closed electoral systems, suggesting that there may be some form of electoral systems effect at play. Although the differences are small and possibly not significant, those from 'open' electoral systems, for instance, report themselves more likely both to engage in constituency work and to maintain a constituency office. UK MEPs score very highly on most measures, however, even though now operating under a 'closed' list electoral system. Indeed, on many measures initial analysis identified the British MEPs as constituting a distinct 'outlier' from most other nationalities. This may be suggestive of a 'cultural' difference in modes of representation; this requires much further investigation, and for the moment we simply report, and note, the large differences between the British and others.

Table 5 reports responses on direct questions asked about MEP's representative roles, and different aspects of representation that might be regarded as important. Once again, British MEPs score highly on most measures, and there is little obvious relationship immediately apparent in how they relate to those in the two categories of 'open' and 'closed' electoral systems. Some other differences appear to fit with expectations of how strategic-electoral incentives might shape behaviour and the interpretation of the representative role: one would expect, for instance, those elected under a 'closed' list to be more concerned with the interests of the national party and those voting for the party, and this is indeed what we find. Similarly, there is (albeit highly tentative) evidence suggesting that those elected under 'open' systems are more concerned with constituency interests. On the other hand, the notion of the importance of representing individual interests is valued even more lowly by those elected under 'open' conditions that closed, with UK representatives scoring more highly than either of the other groups.

As suggested above, this brief, initial and tentative exploration of survey evidence pertaining to the cross-national element of our research design has not been intended to lead to any definitive conclusions. It has, however, indicated some possibilities of differences between representatives chosen under different electoral systems. Future research needs to explore this is much greater detail. Specifically, the immediate agenda for our analysis will include the following work:

- Disaggregating our analysis to allow for individual-level sources of variation;

- Further investigation of the relationship between different measures of constituency representation, to explore whether it is possible to form alternative dimensions of representation and/or Likert scaling of different survey items;

- Building such refined measures into much more sophisticated multivariate analysis; and

- Linking this current and future cross-national work with the cross-temporal analysis of the UK case outlined above.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper is the first in a broader project exploring constituency representation in the European Parliament. As such, it has been necessarily tentative in its empirical work. However, as a basis for further analysis several important points have been made:

- The importance of constituency representation as part of the broader phenomenon of 'active representation';

- The lack of an established academic consensus as to the fundamental reasons prompting variation in the quantity and form of constituency service behaviour that representatives engage in;

- The opportunities offered through analysis of the EP both to explore this significant aspect of modern representation in an increasingly important political arena, and also thereby to develop a powerful research design that overcomes many of the problems inherent in previous work.

The task for the rest of this project is to fulfil the agenda laid out herein.

TABLE 1: ELECTORAL SYSTEMS IN USE FOR 1999 ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

	No. of seats	Electoral system	Allocation of seats	Structuring of lists
Austria	21	List	National	Ordered
Belgium	25	List	Regional	Ordered
Britain	84	List	Regional	Closed
Denmark	16	List	National	Open
Finland	16	List	Regional	Open
France	87	List	National	Closed
Germany	99	List	National[a]	Closed
Greece	25	List	National	Closed
Ireland	15	STV	Multi-member district	Preferential
Italy	87	List	Regional	Open
Luxembourg	6	List	National	Open
Netherlands	31	List	National	Ordered
N. Ireland	3	STV	Multi-member district	Preferential
Portugal	25	List	National	Closed
Spain	64	List	National	Closed
Sweden	22	List	National	Ordered

a   National lists, but the parties ensure a fair regional representation.

TABLE 2: EPRG SURVEY OF THE 1999–04 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, RESPONSE RATES

	No. respondents	No. MEPs	Response rate (%)
Austria	2	21	9.5
Belgium	6	25	24.0
Denmark	7	16	43.8
Finland	7	16	43.8
France	22	87	25.3
Germany	27	99	27.3
Greece	8	25	32.0
Ireland	4	15	26.7
Italy	23	87	26.4
Luxembourg	5	6	83.3
Netherlands	15	31	48.4
Portugal	11	25	44.0
Spain	17	64	26.6
Sweden	10	22	45.5
United Kingdom	35	87	40.2
Total	199	626	31.8

Source: The MEP Survey 2000.

TABLE 3: RESPONDENTS GROUPED UNDER ELECTORAL SYSTEM TYPES

Electoral system	Countries	No. respondents	Proportion of sample (%)
Closed systems	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	118	59.3
Open systems	Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg	46	23.1
Other	UK	35	17.6

Source: The MEP Survey 2000

TABLE 4: MEPS' CONSTITUENCY PRESENCE AND CONTACT GROUPS

	Closed (%)	Open (%)	UK (%)
Involved with constituency work at least weekly[a]	*61.6*	*65.1*	70.6
Have own/shared constituency office[b]	*86.4*	*93.0*	100.0
Weekly contact with citizens[c]	84.8	81.8	97.0
Weekly contact with interest groups[c]	*55.5*	*45.2*	56.8
Weekly contact with lobbyists[c]	*37.6*	*32.6*	84.4
Weekly contact with journalists[c]	52.7	63.6	87.9

a   How much time do you spend on political work in your home country, rather than work at the European Parliament?

b   Which of the following forms of contact with individuals voters do you have?

c   How frequently are you in contact with the following groups, people or institutions?

Source: The MEP Survey 2000.

TABLE 5: MEPs' REPRESENTATIVE ROLES

	Closed (%)	Open (%)	UK (%)
Representing the following is very important/important... [a]			
National party interests	*59.8*	*52.3*	67.6
Constituency interests	*62.5*	*65.9*	100.0
All people who voted for my party	*60.0*	*54.5*	76.5
Particular social group	*39.1*	*27.3*	100.0
Very important/important to the role of the MEP is... [b]			
Mediation between different interests in society	*49.6*	*35.6*	31.3
Individual representation	*32.5*	*28.9*	58.8

a How important is it to you to represent the following groups of people in the European Parliament?
b When thinking about your work as an MEP, how important are the following aspects of your work?

Source: The MEP Survey 2000.

FIGURE X: A TYPOLOGY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS BASED ON BALLOT STRUCTURE CHARACTERISTICS

Candidate-based

Categoric

Ordinal

SMP

Open
list

STV

Closed
list

Ordered
list

Party-based
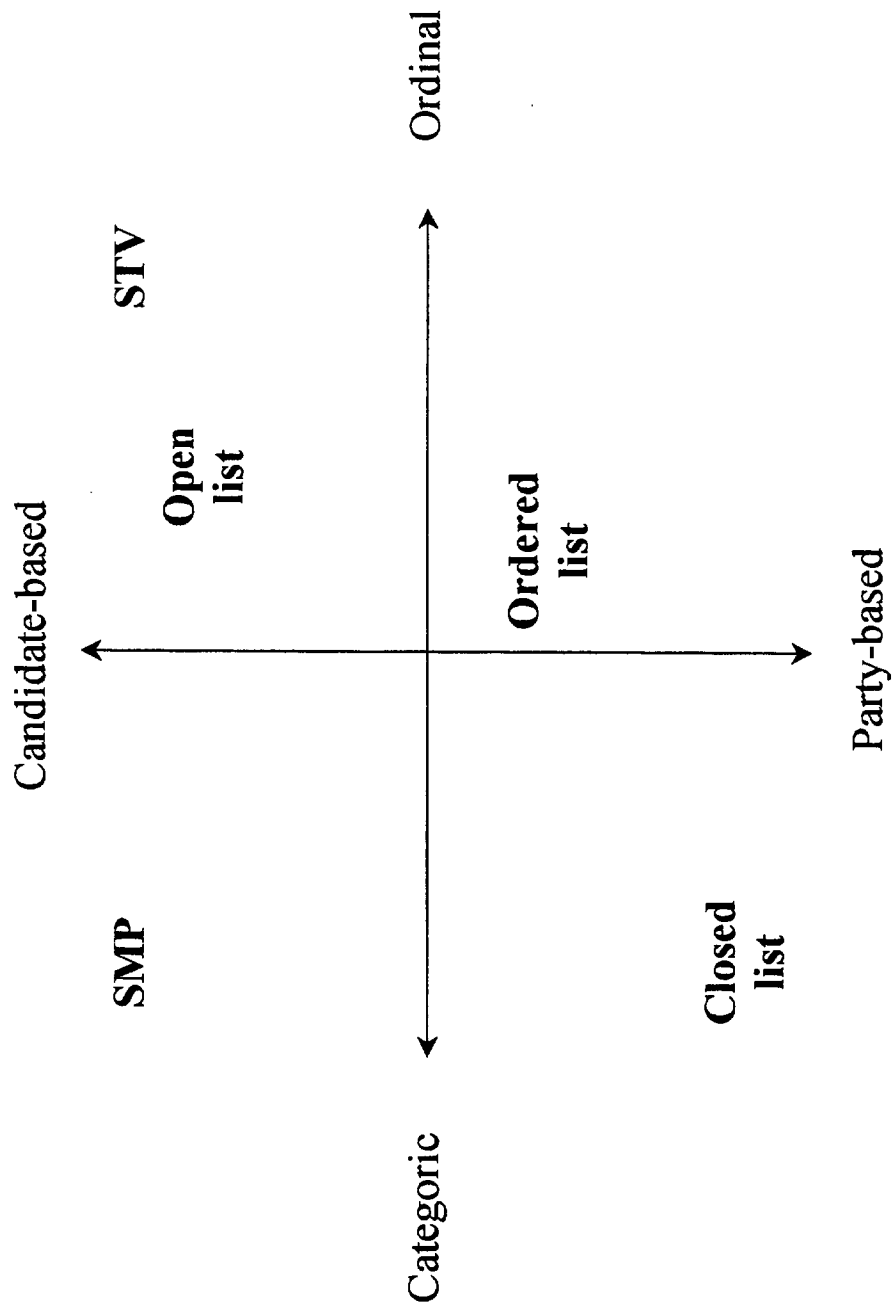
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