

Chapter 12. Ideological congruence following the Great Recession.

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Introduction

We are in a period of huge popular discontent with political elites.¹ The Great Recession (GR) has shaken the European political context by making it more diverse and complex (Kriesi et al. 2008; De Vries & Marks 2012; Freire et al. 2020). Government instability has increased, as well as the fragmentation and polarisation of party systems. Electoral volatility has grown and new actors have appeared at the extremes of the ideological spectrum (Verney & Bosco 2013; Belchior et al. 2016, p. 283). These developments have gone hand in hand with a severe crisis of representation all over Europe. Even in the most advanced industrial democracies, many voters express a growing distrust of their political representatives, manifested in slogans like ‘they do not represent us’ or ‘people have had enough of experts’. The representative link, which is one of the basic pillars of liberal democracy, has been challenged by a large proportion of citizens, who question the capacity of representation of parties and politicians (Dalton 2014; Meer 2017).

In Spain, as in other countries in southern Europe, the socio-economic effects of the Great Recession have been especially harsh. This, combined with a wave of corruption, has produced mounting disbelief in politicians. Only 10% of citizens describe the political situation as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, with ‘politicians, parties and politics’ one of the three main problems that currently exist in Spain for 28% of respondents (CIS 2019). The disconnection between representatives and the people is so deep that 78% of citizens say that ‘politicians are not concerned much about the

opinions of people' (CIS 2016). This is not only a problem in Spain, 'the functional crisis of institutionalised politics has increased to such an extent that, today, a majority of southern European citizens perceive 'politicians' as part of the problem and not as part of the solution' (Subirats 2015, p. 449).

One of the consequences of the crisis has been the transformation of the Spanish party system from a moderate multiparty model (some would even classify it as an imperfect two-party system) to a polarised multiparty model (Orriols & Cordero 2016; Méndez-Lago 2020). From 1982 to 2015 the party system was very stable, with two major parties alternating in power, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) on the centre-left and the Popular Party (PP) on the centre-right. These parties were dominant for decades, reaching the highest point in 2008, when they obtained more than 90% of the seats in the Lower House (*Congreso de los Diputados*). However, following the electoral upheaval of 2015, the mainstream parties have been challenged by the irruption of new political organisations: *Podemos*, on the left of the socialist party, and *Ciudadanos*, a centrist party. As a consequence, the Spanish party system has experienced a process of fragmentation and polarisation. The effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP, see Laakso & Taagepera 1979, pp.79-80) has climbed from only 2.3 in 2008 to a historical record in the national chamber of 3.9, following the parliamentary election in 2016. Likewise, another record has been established in the parliamentary polarisation index (PPI, see Taylor & Herman 1971), which climbed from 3.1 in 2008 to 5.8 in 2016. This abrupt change in the party system has also been accompanied by elite renewal (Portillo-Perez & Dominguez 2020), as the national and regional parliaments had an MP renovation rate above 80%, on average, between the legislatures before and after the GR.

In this context, it seems more necessary than ever to analyse the quality of political representation and to question the extent to which politicians really deliver the will of the people (however difficult the interpretation of this will is); what Pitkin called ‘substantive representation’ (Pitkin 1967). Have the changes in the party system tackled this crisis of representation? Does the new political map better reflect the ideologies of citizens? In the chapter, the evolution of ideological congruence before and after the Great Recession is examined in a two-fold way. First, the focus of analysis is congruence on the left-right scale, which is considered a ‘super-issue’ that summarises many ideological questions, and serves as a ‘cross-cutting device’ that guides people in a complex political reality. Second, the analysis continues with a specific economic issue with strong ideological meaning, that is attitudes towards taxes and public services, which is used as a gauge to assess congruence on the economic dimensions of ideology, during a period of hardship and social unrest. The main findings of the chapter, as will be seen in the subsequent analysis and conclusions, is that left-right congruence has diminished, due to the striking ideological polarisation of politicians; in contrast with the persistent moderation of citizens. Conversely, the level of congruence on economic issues has increased, despite the fact that MPs have also polarised their positions according to their ideology. The reason lies in the greater favourability of citizens towards taxation after the crisis, which has placed them closer to MPs on this issue, although politicians are still more willing to raise taxes than citizens.

Theory and hypothesis

One of the most frequent ways to study substantive representation is by analysing the ideological congruence between representatives and the represented (Golder & Stramski

2010; Mayne & Hakhverdian 2017). The assumption is that a greater similarity between the ideology of politicians and that of their voters implies a greater probability that politicians will make decisions based on the interests and preferences of citizens, which would produce higher quality of political representation. If there is ideological agreement between the people and their representatives (the latter grouped in a legislative chamber, a party, a government, etc.), it will be easier for citizen demands to be delivered and institutionalised in public discourse, norms and/or public policies (Miller & Stokes 1963; Huber & Powell 1994; Wessels 2011; Powell 2013; Carroll & Kubo 2018, p. 248). Ideological congruence favours proper functioning of the representative link and for that reason it has been a highly repeated object of study and discussion (Achen 1978; Dalton 1985; Powell 2009; Ezrow 2010; Golder & Stramski 2010; Arnold & Franklin 2012; Freire et al. 2016).

Some studies argue that the Great Recession has led to a deterioration of ideological congruence between citizens and political elites (Traber et al. 2018, p. 1100; Konstantinidis et al. 2019, p. 328). The effect is more pronounced in those countries that have experienced greater hardship during the crisis (Portugal, Ireland and Italy) and much less in northern Europe (Andreadis & Kartsounidou 2018). The alleged reason is the increase in international interdependence and the greater political weight of supranational organisations (the EU, Troika, IMF, and so on) that have curtailed national sovereignty by imposing unpopular policies, which often provoke nationalist response that seek to reverse international integration (Copelovitch & Pevehouse 2019). This situation has led to ‘a clash of legitimacies’, between the need to comply with an external authority that seeks to be ‘responsible for the people’ and the need to comply with a national legitimacy that aims to be both ‘responsive to the people’ and ‘representative by the people’ (Mair 2013; Rose 2014; Merkel 2015). Parties in

government are more affected by external pressures and disconnection from citizen demands than opposition parties, as the latter can address issues in a more discursive way (Traber et al. 2018, p. 1105). By analysing ideological congruence before and after the Great Recession we aim to identify specific clues about the effect of the conflict of legitimacies in the representative link.

Furthermore, the Great Recession may have produced an additional impact on the level of congruence, by means of the fragmentation and polarisation of party systems in several countries, including Spain. From the theoretical point of view, the relationship between congruence and polarisation is highly controversial. On the one hand, a number of scholars argue that fragmentation and polarisation of the party system improves representation, on the grounds that additional parties increase the chance that any particular voter will find it easier to choose a party that matches their ideological preferences; thus making for more congruence (Huber & Powell 1994, pp. 311-315; Wessels 1999, pp. 151-153; Golder & Stramski 2010, p. 104). Moreover, some argue that polarisation improves ideological congruence, because the appearance of radical organisations help voters visualise the ideological and programmatic position of each party, while in less polarised contexts the ‘catch-all parties’ fail to connect ideologically with their more dispersed voters (Dalton 1985; Mattila & Raunio 2006; Klingemann et al. 2017). Kitschelt (1994) argues that ideological parties at the extremes are less concerned with the positions of the median voter and are much more sensitive to changes in the preferences of their electorate.

Nonetheless, other authors have suggested that when parties move towards the ideological extremes they lose congruence with voters, who are generally located more to the centre of the ideological spectrum (Fiorina & Levendusky 2006; Carroll & Kubo 2018, p. 256). This argument is based on the evidence that political parties are often

more radical than their voters (Blais & Bodet 2006; Powell 2013; Ferland 2018). This has been found to be especially valid on the left, and for liberal positions (Dalton 1985, pp. 283-284; Iversen 1994, pp. 167-171; Hoffman-Lange 2008, p. 61). Likewise in Spain, previous research shows that representatives place themselves more to the left than their voters in general (Sánchez 2018, p. 232).

Ideological congruence in Spain before the GR was relatively high, both at a general level (congruence on the left-right scale) and at the level of preferences for specific policies, such as congruence in preferences for redistribution, taxes and/or public spending (Coller et al. 2018, p. 7; Sánchez 2018). This chapter seeks to determine the impact of the Great Recession on congruence on two aspects: the left-right scale and economic issues. On the one hand, it analyses whether fragmentation has expanded choice for voters and lead to more congruence or, conversely, more party polarisation has produced less congruence, as voters are still mostly moderate. This dilemma raises two alternative hypotheses concerning ideological congruence on the left-right scale:

H1. The Great Recession has led to greater ideological congruence between citizens and representatives, due to the higher number of parties in the system, which better reflect the distribution of voters' preferences.

H2. The Great Recession has led to less ideological congruence, due to radicalisation of MPs, which are now further away from the more centrist citizens.

On the other hand, the chapter analyses congruence on a specific economic issue: the preference for higher taxes and/or more public services. One might expect that in a context of crisis, citizens are particularly attentive to the economic platforms of political parties and therefore, economic congruence should be higher. However, it might also be that some parties are constrained by a strong commitment to fiscal austerity, which

might reduce congruence with voters who want to preserve or even increase expenditure on public services. Two alternative hypotheses are proposed concerning congruence on economic issues, more specifically preferences over taxation:

H3. The recession has led to greater congruence in economy-related issues, given people's growing concern about this theme, and the expectation that citizens are much more aware of parties' positions on these issues.

H4. The recession has led to less congruence in economy-related issues, given that citizens' growing concerns are not responded to by the elites, who are constrained by the need for fiscal austerity.

Data and Methodology

In this chapter, four surveys are employed to measure the ideological positioning of citizens and MPs. Two draw on data from the early stages of the Great Recession and before the transformation of the party system. The first MPs survey was carried out by the research team *Democracia y Autonomías*,² which conducted 580 personal interviews to a representative sample of Spanish national and regional MPs in the period 2009-2010 (the MPs had been elected in 2007-2008). The first citizen database was obtained from the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, study no. 2930 (2012). The other two surveys were conducted by the CIUPARCRI research project, which have been widely used in other chapters in this book. The MPs database includes 452 people from 19 parliaments (Congress, Senate and the 17 regional parliaments), interviewed during 2018-19; calibrated by party, gender and chamber to adjust it to the parameters of the population (1,813 MPs). The citizen database includes a sample of 1,600 people, representing the Spanish population, interviewed in early 2019.

Two questions have been used to identify ideological positions. On the one hand, there is self-placement on the left-right scale: in the surveys conducted a decade ago, 1 represented the extreme left and 10 the extreme right; in the post-GR surveys the scale

was 0-10. On the other hand, economic congruence has been analysed through the following question: *Some people think that public services and social benefits should be improved, even though more taxes have to be paid; others think that it is more important to pay less taxes, even if that means reducing public social services and social benefits. Where would you place yourself?* In the 2009-2011 surveys, the respondents were offered a 5-category scale to answer the question, while in the 2018-2019 surveys the scale was 0-10, which has obliged us to make an adjustment of the scales in order to compare the periods.

Congruence has been measured at population level by comparing the entire survey of MPs and citizens; and at party level, by comparing MPs' ideology of each of the main parties with its voters. Parties were selected on the basis that there were a sufficient number of respondents to make a significant statistical analysis: in 2009, the PSOE, PP and IU (Izquierda Unida); and in 2018, the PSOE, PP, UPs (Unidos Podemos) and Cs (Ciudadanos). As measures of congruence, two indicators have been used. One is the comparison of the mean position of citizens, on each of the scales, with the mean position of the representatives, which is a method that has been used by many scholars (Dalton 1985; Huber & Powell 1994; Golder & Stramski 2010). The other measure is the analysis of congruence in the distribution of the subjects of each group, citizens and MPs, on the left-right and the economic issue scale. To compare distributions, the approach of Golder & Stramski (2010) is used, which employs the so-called *many-to-many* indicator. This is based on the cumulative distributive functions (CDF) of citizen and representative preferences (Golder & Stramski 2010, pp. 96-98), and is represented by the following formula:

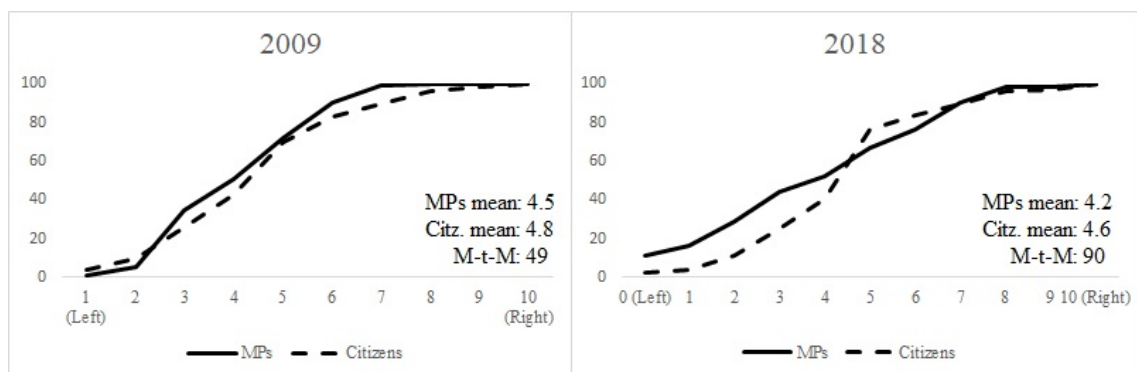
$$Congruence = \sum | F_1 (x) - F_2 (x) |$$

This measure captures the area between the CDFs for both citizens and representatives, the value of which is the result of the sum of the differences for each point on the scale between both accumulated distributions. If congruence is perfect, there is no difference between functions, and the many-to-many value is zero. Whenever there are differences in the cumulative distribution of both functions, the value will be positive; and larger when there is more incongruence. The Golder & Stramski indicator has been chosen by many other studies on ideological congruence (Andreadis & Stavrakakis 2017).

Analysis and Results

Figure 12.1 shows different indicators of congruence between MPs and citizens in 2009 and 2018. On the one side, the difference between the average ideological positions of both groups has barely changed in the last decade. MPs are still slightly to the left of citizens, but the distance has only grown from 0.3 to 0.4. However, the ideological distribution of the populations is evidence of a remarkable change following the Great Recession.

Figure 12.1. Left-Right positions of MPs and citizens in 2009 and 2018.

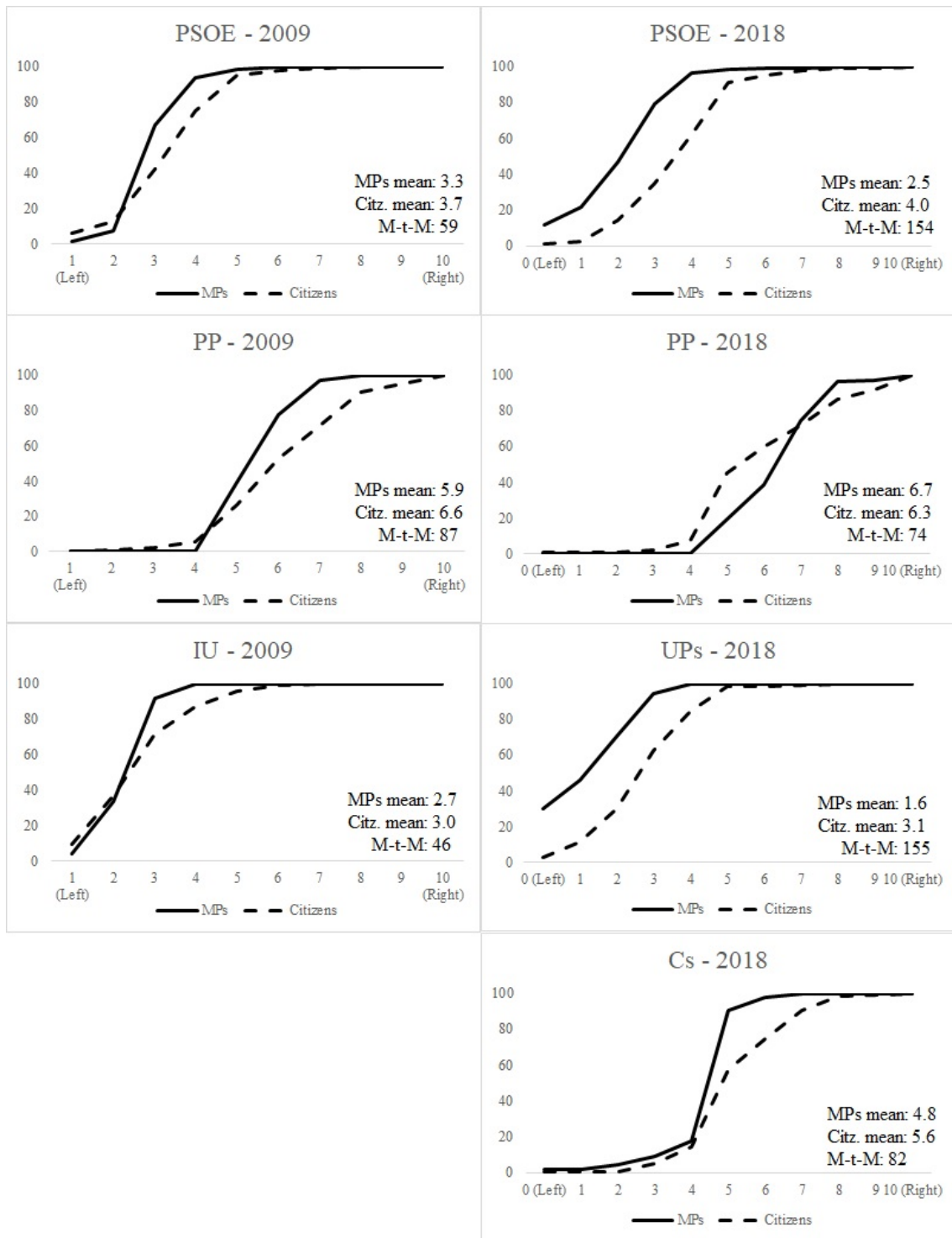


Source: Own elaboration based on the data of the CIUPARCRI Project (2018) and CIS studies: 2827 (2009) and 2930 (2012).

Note: CDF distributions and many-to-many congruence.

The Figure 12.1 maps the cumulative distributions of the left-right self-placements of citizens and parliamentarians, before and after the Great Recession. Two major changes are worth noting. First, in the initial period there was a smaller percentage of MPs than citizens in radical positions, while in 2018 the opposite seems true. This is evidenced by the huge distance between the two lines in the left area of the scale in the second period, as a result of the large proportion of MPs located in extreme left positions. On the opposite end of the scale the shift is not that extraordinary, but still there are many more MPs on the far right in 2018 than there were in 2009, when extreme right voters could barely find ideologically matching MPs. Therefore, there is proof that after the GR politicians have become polarised ideologically, while citizens' ideological distribution has not changed much, and has mostly remained in centrist positions. The consequence of elite polarisation is that the level of congruence between MPs and citizens has decreased following the recession. The many-to-many indicator rose from 49 in 2009 to 90 in 2018, which means that ideological congruence between the whole group of citizens and parliamentarians was significantly reduced.

Figure 12.2. Left-Right positions of MPs and citizens by parties in 2009 and 2018.



Source: Own elaboration based on the data of the CIUPARCRI Project and 2827 and CIS studies: 2827 (2009) and 2930 (2012).

Note: CDF distributions and many to many congruence.

A breakdown of the ideological distribution of different parties confirms the greater polarisation of elites. As shown in Figure 12.2, left-wing representatives (PSOE and

UP) were in 2009 and 2018 more polarised than their voters, a fact that has been noted in previous research in other countries (Dalton 1985, pp. 283-284; Iversen 1994, pp. 167-171; Hoffman-Lange 2008, p. 61). However, in the Spanish case the radicalisation of MPs was particularly intense in 2018. For example, while 67% of socialist MPs and 43% of socialist voters were cumulated in leftist positions (1-3) in 2009, the figures in leftist positions (0-3) were 79% and 35% respectively in 2018. As for IU/UPs, 34% of their MPs and 37% of their voters were located in the most leftist positions (1-2) in 2009, while in 2018 the percentages of positions 0-2 were 71% and 30% respectively. A look at the ideological mean of MPs and voters confirms the growing distance between the two populations in both parties: PSOE MPs were on average 0.4 points to the left of their voters in 2009, but were 1.5 points to the left in 2018. Likewise, IU MPs were 0.3 points to the left of their voters in 2009, while UP MPs saw the distance enlarge to 1.5 points. Therefore, there is evidence that left-wing MPs have moved to the extremes, while their voters have remained in a similar ideological place as they were a decade ago. The consequence has been a sharp decrease in the level of congruence between the MPs and voters of those parties: the Golders-Stramski many-to-many indicator has risen from 59 to 154 for the PSOE, and from 46 to 155 for IU/UPs.

The Popular Party presents another remarkable case of elite polarisation. In 2009 their MPs were clearly more centrist than their voters, as is shown in Figure 12.2 by the dotted line (representing citizens), which is clearly to the right of the solid line (representing MPs). Conversely, in 2018, it is the citizens that cumulate in centrist positions (the dotted line is above the solid one in those positions), while there are many more MPs in right-wing positions: only 3% declared to be in positions 8-10 in 2009, while up to 14% placed themselves in those positions in 2018. However, despite this radicalisation of the conservative MPs the many-to-many congruence between PP

citizens and MPs is slightly better in the second period (from 87 to 74), and the distance between the ideological means of both populations has decreased (from 0.7 in 2009 to 0.4 in 2018). It seems that PP parliamentarians were ‘too’ centrist compared to their voters before the GR and, although more radical now, they are somewhat closer to them.

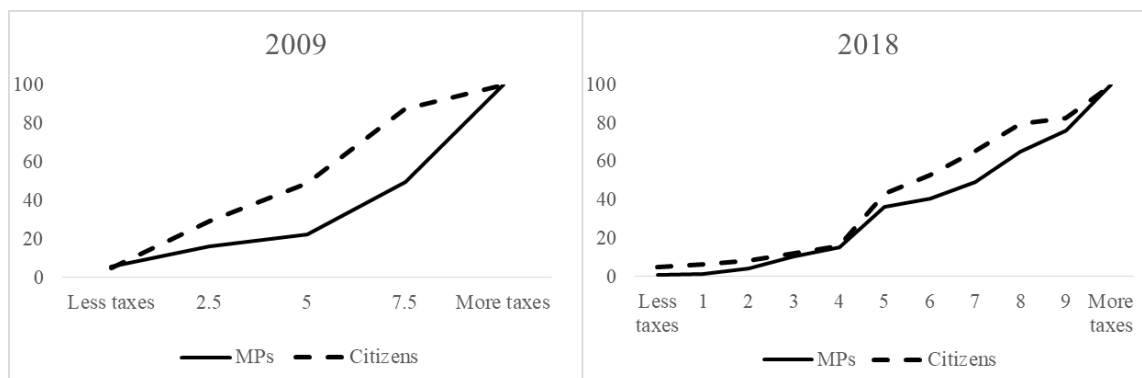
Ciudadanos is the only party whose representatives are more centrist than their voters, as MPs congregate in the centre (72% in position 5), while their voters disperse in a flatter area to the right. There is no point of comparison with the period before the GR, as neither the party nor any equivalent existed, but the level of congruence of Ciudadanos’ MPs and voters is higher than that of the left parties, and closer to the PP (the many-to-many indicator is 82).

In summary, data show that ideological congruence on the left-right scale was lower after the Great Recession than before. In consequence, hypothesis H1 is rejected, as the fragmentation of the party system has not led to greater ideological congruence between citizens and representatives, and more electoral choices have not improved the ideological match of voters with their parties. Conversely, alternative hypothesis H2 is supported, as the evidence is that the higher level of parliamentary polarisation has distanced the elites from the more moderate voters, both in terms of the total survey and at party level. This finding supports those studies (Blais & Bodet 2006; Ezrow 2007, pp. 184-189; Golder & Stramski 2010; Belchior 2013, p. 371; Ferland 2018, pp. 374-75) that have challenged the classic argument that associate proportional representation (and a greater number of parties) with higher congruence.

Additionally, there is evidence that left-wing biggest loss of left-right congruence. By contrast, the centre-right parties, Ciudadanos and the PP, have less mean differences and greater proximity in the ideological distributions of their representatives and voters.

This result is coherent with previous research showing that European conservative parties are often more congruent with their voters than leftist ones (Otero 2014).

Figure 12.3. Preference for level of taxes and public services in 2009 and 2018.



Source: Own elaboration based on the data of the CIUPARCRI Project and CIS studies: 2827 (2009) and 2930 (2012).

Note: CDF

The next step is the analysis of congruence in the attitudes towards taxation and public spending. In this question, respondents voiced their preferences either for higher taxation in order to get more services or for lower taxation, even at the expense of fewer services. Figure 12.3 shows that in the early stages of the crisis this issue unambiguously marked a difference between parliamentary elites and citizens, with the former being much more in favour of higher taxes than the latter. However, in 2018 the difference between MPs and citizens was much smaller, as is confirmed by the closer proximity of the lines. Nevertheless, the lines separate from the midpoint, indicating that citizens are still more reluctant to raise taxes than MPs.

Table 12.1. Preference for public services or less taxation in 2009 and 2018.

	2009				2018			
	MPs average	Voters average	MPs/Voters distance	Congruence	MPs average	Voters average	MPs/Voters distance	Congruence
PSOE	9.1	5.8	3.4	134	8.8	7	1.8	78
PP	5.8	5.4	0.5	30	4.9	5.9	-1.1	46
IU / UPs	9.6	6.8	2.8	116	9.4	7.4	2	92
Cs	-	-	-	-	5	5.6	-0.6	41
Total	7.6	5.7	1.9	79	7	6.3	0.7	33

Source: CIUPARCRI project and CIS ES2827 (2009) and ES2930 (2012).

Note: Comparison of means and many-to-many congruence (Golder & Stramski indicator). In order to facilitate comparison between the two waves, the scale in 2009 has been adjusted to a 0-10 points scale. 0 means preference for less taxation and fewer services and 10 means more taxation and more public services.

The many-to-many indicator has been computed on a 5-point scale.

Data were broken down for parties in Table 12.1. In each of the three major parties that existed in 2009, MPs were more inclined to increase taxation than voters. This was particularly so for the leftist parties, whose voters were significantly more reluctant to raise taxes than their representatives. In the case of the Popular Party, there was much higher congruence on this issue than in other parties, as their MPs were only marginally more in favour of further taxation. Nevertheless, it was remarkable that MPs presented much greater differences among parties than voters. Before the peak of the crisis, the assumption that preference for higher taxation to improve services should be associated with the left, while the preference for lower taxation should be associated with conservative positions, was predominantly true for politicians, but not so much for citizens.

However, in 2018 levels of congruence on taxation were significantly higher than in the previous decade, as is evidenced by the average distances between the groups and the many-to-many indicator of congruence. This holds mainly for the total samples of MPs and citizens and for the leftist parties, basically because voters for these organisations support higher taxation, and are thus closer to their representatives. However, the PP still has the highest level of congruence in this area, but it has been slightly reduced, because their MPs have moved towards less taxation, while the voters are a bit more inclined to vote for better public services. But in a general way, it seems that the Great Recession has shifted the views on taxation of many citizens, who are now more positive towards them, and therefore are now closer to their representatives on this issue. It seems that the crisis might have produced greater citizen awareness

about the importance of taxation as a means to preserve the quality and standards of public services.

Consequently, data seem to support H3, that is, that the recession has produced more congruence on issues related to the economy, because citizens might be more aware of the economic position of parties during a period of fiscal austerity and crucial decisions on spending and taxation. On the contrary, H4 is rejected, as there is no evidence that the political elites have dramatically changed their positions to favour austerity. It is true that MPs' attitudes on this issue have polarised according to ideology, because PP parliamentarians are now clearly more inclined to reduce taxes, but the general picture is more adjustment between the preferences of MPs and citizens, both in the global samples and at party level.

Conclusions

This chapter has assessed the evolution of ideological congruence in Spain following the Great Recession and has reached different conclusions depending on the type of measure that has been used. On the one hand, data show that ideological congruence on the left-right scale is less after the Great Recession than before. On the other, there is more congruence on the preferences of politicians and citizens regarding taxes and public spending. Why is there an apparent contradiction between the findings on the two measures? The explanation lies in the fact that elites have experienced a process of increasing polarisation that have alienated them from voters in ideological terms but, at the same time, voters have become more supportive of taxes and seem to present a better match to the positions of their own parties.

The evidence of lack of congruence is particularly solid in the case of the left-right measure. There is much less ideological congruence after the crisis because the MPs of the major parties are now more polarised than their voters, with the exception of the centrist party, Ciudadanos. Polarisation is due not only to the emergence of a new major radical party (Podemos), but to the fact that the two old mainstream parties have become more extreme and polarised, at the same time as their voters remain in centrally oriented positions. The PSOE's MPs have moved 0.7 points to the left during this decade, while their voters have moved 0.3 points in the opposite direction, approaching the centre. The Popular Party presents similar figures, since their MPs have been found to be more radical after the crisis (0.8 points to the right) and their voters are more moderate (0.3 points). In this respect, the appearance of rival parties (Ciudadanos and UPs) seems to have produced a similar effect to the traditional organisations: both have reinforced their ideological profile and have shifted to the extremes, even at the expense of moving away from their voters.

The polarisation process has made parties more congruent with voters at the extremes of the ideological scale, but much less congruent with those placed around the centre, which outnumber the former by a large margin. Moreover, there has been a significant change in the characteristics of these 'unrepresented' voters: while in 2009 they were typically citizens on the extremes of the scale (far left and far right), in 2018 the vast majority of them were centrists (position 5) far away from the more polarised parliamentarians. Thus, elite polarisation does not respond to mass polarisation, but to a process of ideological reinforcement in the new dynamics of electoral competition. In a sense, the mainstream parties that used to be *catch-all* are much less so today.

It is obvious that the emergence of the populist far-right party VOX in 2019, which has not been included in this analysis for lack of data, has further increased

parliamentary polarisation. One could speculate that future studies, with new survey data, might paint a scenario of greater ideological competition in which the PP MPs might have radicalised as a way to fight their new challenger on the right, as has already happened to the PSOE after the appearance of Podemos on their left.

In any case, the new parties do not present higher levels of congruence than the old ones. Unidas Podemos is as distant from their voters as the PSOE. While Unidas Podemos voters place themselves in a similar position as Izquierda Unida voters before the crisis (3.0 and 3.1 respectively), UP parliamentarians are significantly more inclined to the left (1.6 vs. 2.7). The most ideologically oriented and polarised party on the scale does not achieve high levels of congruence with its more centrally located voters, in line with the findings of Fiorina and other authors (Fiorina & Levendusky 2006; Carroll & Kubo 2018, p. 256). On the other hand, Ciudadanos is the only party whose MPs are closer to the centre than their voters (4.8 vs. 5.6), but for this organisation the mean difference is even higher than that for the Popular Party.

Contrary to the left-right measure, there is a significant increase in congruence regarding preferences on taxes and public services. In 2018 voters were closer to their MPs in their views on taxation, both in the global sample and at party level, with the partial exception of the PP; even though this party is still the closest to its voters in preferences for taxation. Data support the hypothesis that, despite the general deterioration in ideological congruence, people's growing concern about the economy have made citizens much more aware of the parties' positions on these issues and has made them support taxes as a way to maintain and improve public services.

One might think that elite polarisation, which is so important on the left-right scale, is not that noticeable on the other measure: attitudes on taxation. However, after the crisis, MPs support more ideologically sustained positions on the economy: in 2018

the average position of the most pro-market party (PP) is 4.9, far from the 9.4 score of the most public-spending oriented (UP). The real reason for the growing congruence on economic attitudes is that citizens were previously far from the positions of their parties. Voters were far less supportive of taxes than MPs in general, and their parties in particular. In a way, it could be said that the representative link on such an important issue was seriously failing. However, following the economic and institutional crisis, voters of all parties are more inclined to support higher taxation and therefore are now closer to the parties of their choice.

What emerges from this research is that congruence is a far from straightforward issue that goes beyond the traditional left-right scale analysis. Different ways of measuring congruence can lead to different results, because the connection between the concepts of left and right and other ideological issues is highly complex.

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² Additional information on the project can be found in: <https://www.upo.es/democraciayautonomias>. Although this period of study includes the first years of the Great Recession, the parliamentarians had been selected between 2007 and 2008 in the Congress of Deputies and in all the regional chambers (except the Basque Country and Galicia) and therefore represent the pre-crisis party system. The database can be obtained in: *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, study no. 2827 (2012).