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When electors raised their voices: Political representation in nineteenth-century Spain from a conceptual perspective

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Abstract: Political representation is often understood as a static entity; thus, its mutable dimensions have been neglected. In addition, when considering liberal post-revolutionary politics in the nineteenth century, scholars have given most of their attention to the accounts of this period forwarded by liberal elites, thereby taking the voices of those represented for granted. As such, these analysing deputies are disconnected from their electors outside the election processes. This article analyses political representation as a process and considers the voices of representatives and those represented. From a conceptual perspective, it examines notions and terms used by Spanish deputies and electors in the mid-nineteenth century to refer to one another. The enactment of these concepts is placed at the core of their meaning. That is, their meaning changes according to the speaker, the receiver, and the context. In conclusion, we find that, when electors were mobilized on behalf of their requests, and thus insisted on apt representation, deputies – regardless of their political ideology – acknowledged their right to seek accountability. Therefore, accountability was recognized. When those

explicit claims were not raised, accountability was undermined by the deputies, who tended to be disconnected from the voters and prioritized being accountable to their peers.

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Introduction

This paper features an examination of political representation in nineteenth-century Spain using an innovative conceptual approach that stresses the performative dimensions of terms used by deputies and electors when referring to one another.

Traditionally defined and conceived from an elite perspective, representation in this study has been revised and reframed as a process that needs to be defined by the voices of both the representatives and those they represented. More distinctively, the study

proposes an analysis of the changing meanings of expressions referring to deputies and their voters – such as citizens or representatives – based on who used these terms, their objectives for adopting the terms, and the contexts in which they were used. The study focuses on the period from 1837 to 1868, when modern parliamentary institutions were being consolidated. It is true that Spain had experienced liberal periods before, but it is also certain that absolutism survived until 1833 and modern parliamentary institutions were not definitively established until about 1836 onwards, when the regime of the *Estatuto Real* [Royal Statute] (1834–1836), a regime based on a charter granted by the monarchy, was discarded in favour of a liberal constitutional monarchy.

During this period, the first modern political parties, understood as notables' aggrupations, were also established. On the one hand, the Liberal Moderates (Moderates) led most of the governments during this epoch thanks to the confidence of the Crown in supporting ministers of this tendency. Their constitution was founded on the French doctrinaires of the July Monarchy (1830–1848) and based on shared sovereignty between the parliament and the Crown and a very limited concept of political and individual rights. According to the Moderate electoral law of 1846, enforced during the periods of 1846 to 1853 and 1857 to 1865, only 0.8% of the population could vote.¹ On the other hand, the Liberal Progressives (Progressives) were mostly in opposition and preferred the British parliamentary system. They advocated for a wider political sphere of participation, despite refusing universal political rights; notably, this was according to the Progressive electoral law of 1837, enforced during the periods of 1837 to 1845 and 1854 to 1856, when only 2.2% of the population could vote, which increased to more than 5% in the electoral draft bill of 1856, which never came into force.² The Liberal Democrats (Democrats) broke away from the Progressives in 1849 demanding natural rights and universal male suffrage.³

First, this paper explains the theoretical framework used and the innovative dimension introduced to address political representation. Second, by analysing the terms used to refer to deputies and electors in the main parliamentary debates, this study demonstrates the elite's understanding of political representation. This process concurs with the dominant historiographical approach to political representation in liberal post-revolutionary Europe and indicates that beyond elections, deputies were disconnected from their electors. This conclusion is, however, challenged when the study reveals that the electors conceived deputies as being accountable to them and observed them as they performed their parliamentary tasks.

Addressing political representation from its conceptual enactment

The prominent approaches to political representation have focused on the history of the theory of representation and its influence on modern politics, and on mental models and ways in which politicians and parliamentary institutions embody the different interests of the society they govern.⁴ From this point of view, a parliament could be regarded as representative of a society when the members of the former resemble the components of the latter.⁵ This perspective has recently been criticized, since it has often been understood to represent a fact rather than a process,⁶ thereby reducing the idea of representation to a static image of what it really involves.

Scholars, however, no longer view political representation as a fixed or a static position arising out of an electoral process, but rather as a changeable relation with fluctuating outcomes.⁷ Yet, studies introduce a binary resolution that focuses only on what representation signifies and omits the term's changing meaning. This study tries to bridge this gap by exploring the enriching connections between intellectual history and a (cultural) history of performance.

Stressing the need to move beyond a strict conceptual analysis, the latest

research emphasizes parliamentary behaviour to provide a better understanding of parliamentary thinking.⁸ Specifically, by exploring the way parliamentarians perform, we can understand their political philosophies. Yet, representation as a process entails not only the representatives, but also the represented. One way to overcome this possible bias is by framing the performative dimension of representation from the perspective of the interactions between the represented and the representatives.

Scholars have recently begun to address nineteenth-century political institutions as encounters between citizens and the state which allowed interactions between the represented and their representatives.⁹ Based on these recent developments, this study considers how different terms and their changeable connotations were used by the represented and their representatives to describe one another; that is, how terms were enacted within these interactions and the impact they had on the process of representation. In conducting this conceptual analysis, we explore the practical dimension of representation, as it was only by enacting representation in the practical sphere that these terms were shaped. In other words, the same word had slightly different implications and nuances depending on the context in which it was applied, who formulated its appearance, and its intended audience. Concepts and values were thus shaped during interactions and debates.¹⁰

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the relation established between deputies and electors shaped politics in terms of accountability and effective representation. Accountability has often been linked to responsiveness, namely, the capacity of governments and representatives to adopt policies that are preferred by the citizens they represent.¹¹ However, as Bryan Garsten has stated, representative governments garner legitimization and favourable public opinion, not only based on their responsiveness but also their capacity to multiply and challenge governmental

claims to represent the people.¹² Therefore, this study defines accountability as the capacity of representatives – in this case, deputies – to report their actions to those they represent in response to their claims.

Among the main data sources used are the consultation of electoral protests and acts in the Spanish Archive of the *Congreso de los Diputados* [Congress of Deputies] in Madrid, as well as the minutes of the parliamentary debates of the *Dario de las Sesiones* [Diary of the Sessions] of the *Congreso de los Diputados*. Regarding the former, more than 200 documents were examined. The next section explores the latter by analysing how deputies referred to voters and to themselves during main parliamentary debates.

Neglecting those represented: The inherited vision of the liberal elites

Spanish historiography has paid particular attention to electoral and political cultures by analysing electoral legislation, collective biographies, and public speeches to understand political representation in the nineteenth century.¹³ The complex relationships between local elites and parties have also been highlighted, while considering the district as a space of political negotiation.¹⁴ Consequently, interaction between representatives and the represented have been considered to some extent, and filtered by the initiative, legislation, and speeches of the former.¹⁵

According to the concept of liberal political citizenship, which links the vote with proprietorship, those who fall outside the classification of ‘political citizens’ are feared due to their lack of aptitude regarding political decisions. Only those who have been appropriately prepared for the task are able to act with autonomy and exert a suitable judgment in political decision-making and representation. Representatives must be socially superior to those they represent in terms of wealth, talent, and virtue, so that a principle of distinction can be justifiably established among the citizens.¹⁶

As representatives were drawn from the most talented and prepared sectors of

liberal society, they did not have to maintain uninterrupted contact with the people they represented, with elections serving as the ultimate mechanism for holding the elected accountable. For this reason, voters, especially on an individual basis, were hardly mentioned or considered in the main parliamentary debates of the century. These particular events could include the King or Queen's speech at the official opening of parliament, in the subsequent parliamentary responses, or the debates on budgets.¹⁷

In those speeches one might find expressions referring to people from a communitarian perspective. In other words, society was usually defined by social linkage or by political dimensions that were conferred rather than intrinsic or natural. To illustrate this, terms like '*el pueblo*' [the people] or '*la nación*' [the nation] were frequently embraced. The following is an example from the Spanish state opening speech of 1840:

Given that this great work of pacification has been so well advanced [regarding the Spanish Carlist War between 1833 and 1840], it is essential to make the people feel the advantages of the constitutional regime through laws that, being in line with the Constitution of the State, give strength and vigour to the Government, and securities to the conservation of order and public tranquillity.¹⁸

During most of the nineteenth century, these terms lost their political dimensions, but not just when they were adopted by the Moderates. For instance, in this example, the Progressive Minister of the Treasury, Pedro Surrà, in debating the 1841 budgets said: 'Keep in mind that the account is the result of collections that have been charged to the nation for the income voted by the parliament'.¹⁹

The word 'nation' was formulated as a depoliticized expression considered essentially from a submissive position. As the political subject was restricted to citizens who owned land or capital and had sufficient economic capacity or who otherwise had the intellectual and professional achievements to demonstrate autonomy, the rest of

society was seen as potentially influenced. A communitarian vision of a nation is expressed in this approach, by which individuals submit to the political guidance of the elite.²⁰ Supporting the leading role of the elite, until the last century Spanish historiography regarding nineteenth-century politics, despite differing on the place of the elite, assigned them the power and neglected the agency of citizens and non-citizens.²¹

This perspective was a result of placing nineteenth-century elites at the centre of the analysis. This view of politics was not Spanish in its particularity, but a shared perception among liberals. According to François Guizot – a representative of right-wing French liberals, president of the French Council of Ministers at the end of the July Monarchy (1847–1848), and a benchmark for Spanish Moderates – representative governments did not have to be based on the rights of people, but rather on the principles of reason, truth, and justice.²² Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard, a French philosopher and liberal doctrinaire politician, defined representation as a metaphor. To him, it was a means to establish a lower chamber, not a linkage based on rights, and parliament was regarded as a power established by the constitution, not a chamber obliged to embody the opinions of voting citizens.²³ This idea concurs with the work of Benjamin Constant, one of the main architects of doctrinarism, who maintained that the proprietors as cultivated individuals were the best prepared collective to represent the interests of society as a whole.²⁴

In Spain, conservative theorist and deputy Juan Donoso Cortés also rejected national sovereignty, as he understood it to be an expression of the general will, and thus not based on reason because not everybody had the same rational capacities. Consequently, he concluded that representation had to be based on the law as an

expression of reason and justice, as it was elaborated by those who were intellectually able to do so.²⁵

In a country politically dominated by the Moderates during most of the second third of the nineteenth century, and whose main political referents were the French doctrinaires, the political influence of the electorate was mostly absent within the main parliamentary debates. For instance, Spanish Queens, such as Isabel II, who ruled the country from 1843 to 1868, and Queen Regent María Cristina (her mother), who ruled from 1833 to 1840, used to address the *Diputados* [Deputies] in their opening speeches, not the electorate. In fact, the electorate was not mentioned in subsequent parliamentary responses and rarely in the main parliamentary debates.

It was not strange to find that within these speeches, expressions such as ‘*representantes de la nación*’ [representatives of the nation]²⁶ or the ‘*electos de la nación*’ [elected of the nation] were used as substitutes for deputies,²⁷ as such wording did not imply any direct accountability to those represented but signalled the representatives’ authority as distinguished personalities fit to interpret the demands of the people. These speeches thus confirmed the disconnection between the deputies and the electors. In other words, it was the principle of distinction that justified the deputies’ representation of society; their merit as a select segment of the society differentiated them from the electors.²⁸ In other liberal countries like the Netherlands, as in Spain, liberal representation was assumed to be in opposition to democracy, and so deputies did not have to be accountable to the whole population, but were rather required to act with autonomy or, at the very most, consider their peers, as the system was not based on national sovereignty.²⁹

This was certainly not a homogeneous view of representation common to all liberal sensibilities. In fact, during periods of Progressive dominance in the Spanish

government – the *Bienio Progresista* [Progressive Biennium] from 1854 to 1856 and the *Sexenio Democrático* [Democratic Sexennium] from 1868 to 1874 – notions such as ‘nation’ recovered their political relevance within parliamentary speeches.³⁰ With the basis of the Constitution of 1869 being national sovereignty, deputies were defined using not very dissimilar terms like ‘*electos del pueblo*’ [elected of the people] or ‘*representantes de la nación*’ [representatives of the nation], but these terms were enacted with stronger linkages to society as a whole. These were the words of King Amadeo I in 1871 at the State opening speech:

This is the second time I find myself among the representatives of the Spanish Nation; [...] taking advantage of this solemn occasion that the exercise of the constitutional practices offer me, I have to confess to you, representatives also of the country, the feelings of my grateful soul, to which it fortifies every day the purpose of consecrating myself to the difficult and glorious task that loyally and voluntarily I have accepted and I will keep doing as long as I maintain the trust of this loyal people, to whom I will never try to impose myself.³¹

It is true that at the time the government comprised different liberal sensibilities, of which the Democrats were in the minority; yet, they had an undeniable influence, as the 1869 Constitution recognized some of their long-held beliefs on universal male suffrage and the rights of assembly and association. It could be said, as some scholars have, that as long as advanced liberals wanted to abolish census suffrage and limitations of political rights by property, and thus were in favour of universal male political citizenship, they understood there should not be distinguished leaders. Therefore, the linkage between the electors and the deputies should be stronger.³² Moreover, the Moderate’s electoral law of 1846 established only those who made direct taxable contributions worth 12,000 *reales* (Spain’s currency at the time) were eligible to be deputies while those who paid 400 *reales* could be enfranchised. In contrast, under the

Progressives' 1837 rule there were no specific restrictions to becoming a deputy beyond being considered a citizen. Thus, under the rule of the latter, the social gap between deputies and electors was less present. In the next section, we show this relationship of accountability between the elected and the electors also depended on the process of representation and the capacity of the latter to be considered by the former, and thus, it depended not only on the political culture but also on how words were enacted. In particular, the next section analyses electoral protests by the voters, revealing that they were mobilized to extract accountability from the deputies for their actions.

Shaping terms in the claiming process of representation

As already discussed in the previous section, representation in liberal Spain, as in the main liberal countries of the epoch, had largely neglected the voice of the represented and instead stressed a supposed disconnect between the political representatives and those they represented. At least this is what has been perceived by focusing on the elites' vision, while the perception of the voters and the non-voters regarding the definition of liberal representation has mostly been neglected. Scholars have recently begun to challenge this perspective by examining sources written by voters and non-voters to explore their understanding of politics – not works filtered by the elite.³³

Regarding public talks, as Finlayson noted, a performance includes a speaker, an audience, and a text, but these elements exist and are clearly identifiable only in relation to one another.³⁴ In other words, they are parts of a global unit – the performance – and are defined and shaped in relation to one another. In parliamentary debates, except for the periods when the Democrats were influential, electors were hardly mentioned. Voters were either physically absent or neglected by the deputies. As such, the deputies did not have to be accountable to them. For this reason, the deputies ignored them or at

the most mentioned them to arrogate to themselves legitimacy.

This is observed in deputies' speeches, which rarely included any explicit claim by the voters. Here a claim is understood as a written or oral request from a voter or group of voters to their representative, to state that a politician acts on their behalf. In fact, the term 'electors' or 'citizens' – legally understood as political citizens – and its evocation linked to the relation with deputies was frequently adopted as a form of rhetoric to confer legitimacy on the arguments offered. For instance, if a deputy had been elected legitimately or, at the other extreme, if their position was in question, it was a way of demonstrating that 'the people who are appointed as representatives [...] are or are not the faithful echo of the electors'.³⁵ For instance, in this excerpt from a speech delivered by the Moderate Minister of the Treasury, Alejandro Mon, in January 1847, he asserted in Parliament that deputies should represent the will of the majority of their electorate:

It is of interest to all of the country [...] that all Spanish people have voted with complete liberty. If there is anyone here who has come against the will of most of the electors; if he has come by force or violence, or by the guile of authorities or other persons [...], what behoves this country is that elections be recognized as free, and if there was a deputy imposed by force, [what behoves the country is that] he does not come in.³⁶

Yet, the words of Mon can be viewed with scepticism in the sense that the Moderate government did not assure complete liberty for electors, as the pressure on voters of the administration favouring official candidates has widely demonstrated.³⁷ Thus, these words could constitute more of an instrumental way to confer legitimacy on deputies supporting the government rather than a true recognition of the electors' rights, freedoms, and capacity to seek accountability.

Even Progressives used this resource when mentioning their voters. The

Progressive Deputy Francisco Luján, to support provincial councils' law project in 1842, required opponents of the project, and thus of the government, to 'tell the truth with courage, because that is the reason they have been given their powers by the electors who have designated them'.³⁸ Again, the right of the electors to seek accountability from their representatives was not at the core of these words. When politicians were not answering to a direct appeal by their electors, they tended to mention them as a rhetorical instrument to challenge the opposition and to gain legitimacy. The Moderate Francisco Martínez de la Rosa left no doubt when he stated:

In the constitutional system, all faculties of electors die, extinguish [...] with the mere act of placing the ballot in the electoral urn. There concluded the electors' function. [...] The deputy has the duty to inquire the opinion of his province as a fact to form his own conviction, but he has later no commitment to obey.³⁹

In this regard, the central role of the nomination hustings in British electioneering is worth mentioning. Candidates had to attend this ritual to be publicly ratified or rejected by both electors and non-electors. It was a ritual of political inclusion of excluded sectors, and it was thus considered as a form of legitimizing the politicians and their positions.⁴⁰

Yet, this vision of representation as a disconnection between deputies and voters is a result of conceiving representation as a static situation arising only during the elections and not ever again. Hence, a part of the unit was neglected, reflecting an elitist conception of the representatives. Terms were only enacted to benefit those who spoke, without appealing to the other part of the unit.

Recent studies have emphasized that interactions between voters and deputies went beyond elections and concerned the whole term of the political mandate.⁴¹ For them, the process of representation is seen not only as a state of affairs that results from elections, but as a dynamic process of claim making and claim receiving.⁴² That is, one

would represent the other when considering these requests, and likewise, the latter would try to ensure representation by the former by voicing their claims, whereby a relationship closely linked to accountability was established. At least, this is assumed after analysing the voice of the voters. This is explored later in electoral protests where the electors formulated their claims to the deputies as well as debates in which the deputies spoke because of being appealed to by the electors; that is, voters formulated claims and deputies received them. Therefore, we now consider how the words used to refer to the voters and the deputies changed their meanings according to the context and, more tangibly, how the interactions between the representatives and the represented helped to modify the words.

When politicians referred to electors or political citizens without an explicit claim or without any political motive, the connotations of their words lost their political influence. Conversely, the notion (political) of ‘citizen’ and other similar words like ‘electors’ gained political relevance when used by the voters. Given this, electors adopted a less submissive position and an autonomous place under the law, as this example from an electoral protester suggests:

In using the right hand as a voter, it has granted me the law. I ask that the *mesa* [polling station] considers the following events, and include them in their minutes and resolve them as they are ruled [...] by the electoral law.⁴³

We can also see this change in meaning occurred with the term of ‘*el pueblo*’ [the people] when it was used by the electors. Electors even felt that the need to warn politicians depended on how much they trusted them, so that ‘alas, the day the people see that in practice [the institutions] are a dead letter and [become] aware they have been replaced by arbitrariness and fraud’.⁴⁴ It is significant here to understand how the claim-making process, by which electors submitted electoral complaints to their

representatives hoping for changes regarding the electoral results, shaped these terms, granting them a semblance of accountability and conferring the electors with accountability rights that were not often recognized outside of this process. That is, when those represented defined themselves as electors or referred to the people – in particular within electoral protests – they were usually thinking of themselves as subjects with political rights who had to be respected and to whom the representatives were accountable. Such instances were not exceptional, but frequent and extensive among the consulted sources, and emerged from the wide range of liberal ideologies described here. The following concerns an electoral complaint lodged in 1839:

The electors of the city of Vigo, who subscribe, by themselves and on behalf of their colleagues, despite their reluctance [to] find the need to raise their respectful demands to the worthy representatives of the nation, requesting [...] the annulment of the elections [...] as illegal in fact and in law [...]. The Provincial Council, far from fulfilling this duty, has tried to elude it and has effectively done so, thereby incurring a serious responsibility before the government and the people.⁴⁵

That is, if the representatives, who were conferred with political duties by those they represented, did not perform in accordance with the electors' will, the electors felt they had the right to express their grievances so that their politicians would act on behalf of them. Here is an example from another electoral protest:

When citizens find their deepest hopes are disappointed and their basic rights, their voting rights, are obstructed by party interests, it is only fair that they should be able to provide their complaints to the national representation so that their will is respected, and that those who contravene the law are punished.⁴⁶

Pierre Rosanvallon introduced the notion of 'counter-democracy' to describe the way in which different societies respond to the dysfunctions of representative regimes. Since trust and distrust are connected to these systems, civic dissatisfaction is

expressed. Rosanvallon proposed different axes for the concept, and differentiated between a liberal distrust, as a form of suspicion of the power of the people, and a democratic distrust, as the ways people maintain pressure on governments or elected officials to serve the common good and/or to keep their promises.⁴⁷ The first axis seems to be formulated from a liberal elite's perception, but as shown, the second axis is still detected in liberal times, but from the political citizens' demands. Here we focused only on electors, but it is also true that wider sectors of society – who did not have electoral rights – tried through petitions to maintain a watchful eye on the actions of politicians. Specifically, petitions enabled political participation regardless of the restrictions of the census suffrage epoch.⁴⁸

This section focuses on electoral protests as voters' attempts to improve control over electoral processes in the context of government domination and to seek accountability from the politicians. Hence, the electorate gained political competency when they defined themselves in the process of claim-making by addressing complaints to their representatives. They tried to monitor deputies' decisions and actions to the point of conceiving that they 'would fail in one of their most sacred duties if they did not elevate their voice to it [the august parliament]'.⁴⁹

Of course, differences can be found between Moderate and Progressive voters. Progressive voters usually appealed to '*representantes del pueblo*' [representatives of the people] or even 'representatives of the nation',⁵⁰ while the Moderates rarely appealed directly to deputies through protests and instead appealed directly to '*al Congreso de los Diputados*' [to the Congress of Deputies].⁵¹ All of them, however, appealed to the '*Congreso de Diputados de la nación*' [Parliament of the Nation].⁵² In the end, they all expected the parliament and their deputies to consider their demands and their right to hold them accountable. Having considered the voice of electors within

the claim-making process, the next section examines the voice of deputies when receiving claims from their voters and how this context shaped the enactment of the words referring to the electors and the deputies.

Deputies and their accountability to voters

As political representation was conceived as a process that extended beyond elections, appeals from voters to their deputies were also considered in a broader context, beyond electoral protests. This section examines the interventions of deputies in the lower chamber in response to indirect appeals made by voters (mainly through letters). A sample of dozens of examples – on average more than thirty – found in every legislature is provided here. Their speeches attest that instead of being disconnected, electors observed deputies' actions and demanded accountability from them. Following Rosanvallon's counter-democracy proposition, distrust in representative regimes was expressed in finding ways of maintaining pressure on authorities.⁵³ We would further add that it also articulated a mechanism that bolstered the mobilization of voters and their engagement in politics regardless of the dominant elitist view, which tended to neglect their voice beyond elections.

Moderate Claudio Moyano, for instance, urged deputies to conclude the parliamentary answer to the Queen's speech in the legislature 1846–1847 to save time since he believed that, like him, all the deputies were encountering pressure to resolve the matter expeditiously. He affirmed receiving 'twenty letters from my electors and from ones who are not my electors, in which they complain about the time we are spending [...] when other pending subjects are being awaited for the benefit of the people'.⁵⁴

Progressive Miguel Alejos Burriel also referred to the trust of '*los pueblos*' [the people] and implied that parliament as a body is accountable to the people. To maintain

the trust of his district, he supported an exposition of a town council of his electoral district (Alcañiz) in Teruel. The petition asked for economic aid because of the Carlist War (1833–1840), which confronted both liberals and absolutists in Spain. Alejos spoke not only in response to this petition, ‘but also for letters I have received today from Alcañiz and other towns’.⁵⁵

As Karen Lauwers has shown in her studies on France in the early twentieth century, letters addressed to deputies were used by individuals to make requests to representatives. Whether or not they had political voting rights, ordinary people finally affirmed their civil citizenship by submitting requests.⁵⁶ That is, they defined themselves as political actors, whose demands were worth consideration by their representatives.

As discussed in previous sections, when deputies received a request from a voter and when they subsequently spoke on behalf of the voters, the meaning of concepts such as ‘voters’ and ‘the people’ evolved. Voters were indeed regarded as relevant political actors rather than defined as being outside the process. When deputies referred to their voters in the context of claim receivers, they tended to empower them through expressions that conferred rights of accountability on them, even when the words were the same or similar to those used previously.

For example, José de la Peña Aguayo, together with other Moderate deputies, introduced an amendment in the 1845-46 legislature as a result of which taxes were urgently reduced and ‘relief’ was offered to taxpayers.⁵⁷ What is relevant here is those representatives raised their voices in parliament after receiving letters from voters or feeling the pressure of taxpayers and institutions who sent petitions and grievances to parliament against taxes. This pushed them to acknowledge the responsibilities deputies had towards those they represented: ‘it should not be tolerated that deputies of the

nation remain silent in moments when the people are speaking'. Consequently, they felt impelled to vindicate people's demands as 'at this time, deputies have to be the organ of these complaints, they have to fulfil the first duty that they have undertaken when accepting the election of their respective electoral colleges'.⁵⁸

Voters were not physically present in those debates, but as these examples suggest, deputies were aware of them, particularly when a claim was raised by them. The deputies felt they had to be accountable to the electorate as the receivers of voters' claims and within this process, as stated before by Finlayson, the audience was crucial in defining the performative talks.⁵⁹ In other words, voters did not have to be physically present, but since parliamentary sessions were covered daily by the press, the interventions of the deputies were widely published so that voters could easily monitor their representatives.

Concerning parliamentary contexts, Christopher Reid demonstrated how relevant an audience is in shaping debates from both an oratory and a content perspective. On the one hand, the former alters the rhetorical contexts so that words can be reproduced by the press and judged by the reading nation. On the other hand, the latter has space constraints and creates a relationship between the public speaker and the audience in the auditorium. With regard to content, the speakers interact with the audience to either confirm or appeal to existing political relationships or to negotiate new ones.⁶⁰ This is at the core of the political relationship between the electors and the elected. The deputies may or may not have felt that they were accountable to all their voters beyond elections, but since voters sent them claims they had to consider them as long as their words could be reproduced in the press and thus publicly judged. In a way, the voters were indirectly present in the auditorium during those parliamentary interventions.

Even Moderates such as Domingo Fontán acknowledged voters in some of his parliamentary interventions and assumed he was accountable to them. This occurred particularly after he received letters with claims from voters in the Pontevedra district who were discontent about industrial and agricultural taxes and wanted him to express their grievances in parliament. He said: ‘I have been honoured and preferred from a district, to which I will work for [...] and this compels me to look with preference for its interests’. He assumed he had been chosen as their ‘protector’. However, in this case, he did not refer to the voters, but to ‘the major taxpayers’ of the towns represented,⁶¹ as only those who paid taxes to the value of 200 reales could vote according to the 1837 electoral law.

This example places the nature of accountability at the centre of the debate; namely, the traditionally held understanding of the elite’s accountability. In this regard, the deputies were disconnected from their voters after elections and, thus, they were only accountable to their peers, which prevailed until the end of the nineteenth century.⁶²

Here is an example from a Progressive, Pascual Madoz, elected in a Catalan district. He represented the interests of Catalan industrialists, who were unwilling to consider tariff law reform in 1849, which until then favoured their interests through the prohibition of textile importation. Madoz had received letters from the Factories Commission in Barcelona from at least the beginning of the legislature in 1846, pushing him to protect ‘manufacturing interests’.⁶³ Consequently, as a claim receiver, he requested an adjournment and assumed his duty as deputy was directly connected to the will of his entrusted: ‘It is well worth the matter that [the antecedents of the law] be printed separately, that they be distributed to the deputies so that, enlightened with them and with the opinion of their entrusted, they can come with full knowledge of the facts

to discuss a matter of such importance'.⁶⁴ In fact, he had investments in the industry and thus, also relied on his peers.

Catalan's business elites and other landed elites tried to influence the actions of deputies, who at that the time conjugated the interests of the district with the general ones.⁶⁵ Focusing on the action of local elites towards deputies and governments is not a new insight. They were particularly active concerning organized economic groups, with whom deputies shared interests, as other deputies without those links tended to neglect the interests of the voters to favour their own.⁶⁶

As demonstrated by the example of Fontán, by giving preference to the wealthiest voters, deputies tended to favour the claims of their peers. In another example, Antonio Aguilar, deputy of the Union Liberal – a political aggrupation that emerged between 1854 and 1868 among liberals from the advanced sectors of the Moderates and conservative sectors of the Progressives – raised a question to the government ministry at the beginning of 1865 concerning the suspension of the main town council of the district where he was elected, Montilla (Córdoba). He acknowledged that he would not have said a word if he 'had not have received a letter from my district'.⁶⁷ In other words, he responded to the appeal made by concerned politicians in his electoral district, and consequently spoke up because he felt accountable to them.

Being accountable to peers does not imply, however, that voters who were not considered peers were systematically neglected, particularly after appealing to their deputies. Yet, a mobilization of electors to push deputies to act was needed. In fact, deputies felt they had to be accountable to their voters as long as a claim-making process was detected, which is an explicit request. Therefore, within this process,

accountability also depended on petitioners' insistence and not just their political culture.⁶⁸

As an example, Moderate deputy Juan Ribó received several requests from the people he represented in the province of Zaragoza. They submitted a petition to parliament but complained to him about the delays caused by the Commission of Petitions being inactive for three months. He raised this question in parliament, highlighting the representatives' obligation to attend to the demands of the people: 'It would be useless for the people to make petitions to Congress, if they were not to be examined'.⁶⁹

Thus, by focusing on the agency of the electors we see the complexity of the relations between those represented and their representative, which went beyond a homogeneous elite absorbing the power and actions of electors and was also concerned about different interests and collectives. In fact, deputies, regardless of their political culture, also defined themselves with stronger linkages to their electorate in the context of claim receivers when receiving tangible requests.

For instance, the deputy of the Union Liberal, Frutos Saavedra Meneses, referred to 'the nation' and '*el país*' [the country] as synonymous concepts; moreover, in parliament, he also referred to his '*comitentes*' [entrusted] who 'were interested in tranquillity and material progress [...] stability of the existent order' and not to those in the government. He understood that as a deputy he had a commitment to his entrusted; therefore, he assumed 'I am not, as a deputy, an entirely free man, as I believe I have to consult what my entrusted think. I have this double character of free [agent] and delegate, like all other men here have'.⁷⁰

Saavedra seems to use the concept 'entrusted' as a synonym for voters or, at least, he included voters among them. In fact, the word '*comitentes*' [entrusted] implies

an individual assigning his functions to another, particularly in a business context. In a way, entrusted infers voters assigning their representation to deputies and so being entrusted to deputies. Therefore, this word recognizes deputies as being accountable to voters.

Democrat José María Orense, in a debate claiming for a better road network, assumed his duty as deputy was interconnected with the claims of the nation; yet, he did not use the notion of ‘voters’, ‘electors’, or ‘the people’ as the base of the nation. Instead, he highlighted entrustment again with the following: ‘this is our mission as we are prosecutors of the supreme power of the nation, especially when our entrusted remit to us, like they do to me, a quantity of letters full of reclamations and complaints regarding this particular matter’.⁷¹

In short, beyond differences in political cultures, deputies recognised electors’ right of impelling them when those were mobilised for their rights.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between electors and deputies by analysing Spanish political representation in the nineteenth century. The results showed that the conceptual framework for voters and deputies was as relevant as political culture. Contact between the two helped to shape terms, as well as political representation, so that the accountability of deputies to those they represented could extend beyond the deputies’ peers as long as voters raised their voice for their claims and rights.

This article introduces the initial findings of an ongoing study. While some provisional conclusions may be drawn from these findings, more research is needed to confirm and expand on them and to address other related issues concerning political

representation, the place of voters within this process in liberal Spain, and variations between cities, towns, and rural areas – or between different parts of Spain.

On the one hand, voters were hardly defined by deputies unless they received an explicit claim from them. At best, deputies mentioned electors to arrogate themselves legitimacy, but without acknowledging they were accountable to their voters. As long as deputies did not receive claims from electors beyond elections, they did not feel the need to appeal to electors' political rights, which were therefore neglected. This implies that deputies introduced themselves as political actors disconnected from the interests of their electors which then validates the prevailing views of political representation in liberal times. Hence, electors were also defined with less political relevance or even neglected when the claim-making processes were not stimulated.

Conversely, when an explicit claim-making process was detected, by which electors made requests to their representatives, the notions referring to deputies and electors reinforced both the possession of the rights held by those represented and the accountability required of politicians. Here, the process of representation reinforced the bond between deputies and voters as long as claims were present and regardless of political culture. In other words, as long as electors mobilized on behalf of their rights, asserting them in relation to their representatives, the dynamics of accountability were upheld and deputies were thus compelled to take their requests into account. When no demands were being asserted, accountability was weakened, as were the capacities of electors and the notion of electors being enacted upon by deputies.

As a result of these considerations, representation in liberal times cannot be reduced to a metaphor, as Royer-Collard suggested, and most liberal Spanish politicians accepted at that time. This perspective views representation from a fixed position based on the political worldviews of the elite. This is because liberal politicians, except

Democrats, were reluctant to be observed by voters. However, representation at the time also gave rise to a stronger connection between representatives and those represented, regardless of their political views, particularly when the latter mobilized themselves to assert their rights and pushed for the accountability of their representatives.

For this reason, it can be said that, as long as a relation of accountability was identifiable between those represented and their representatives, representation cannot be reduced to a metaphor; instead, it should be perceived as a modern conception of responsibility. Deliberation, representation, responsibility, and sovereignty form the core concepts of parliamentarism and differentiate a parliament from any other type of assembly.⁷² However, this is not only the responsibility of the government to the parliament, but – in the terms used here – of the representatives to those they represent, as the former depends on the latter’s recognition.

Notes

1. Gómez Ochoa, “El liberalismo conservador español”; Veiga, “El liberalismo conservador.”
2. Romeo Mateo, “La cultura política del progresismo”; Suárez Cortina, *La cultura progresista*; Ollero Vallés, “Cultura política del progresismo.”
3. Peyrou, *Tribunos*; Peyrou, “Demócratas y republicanos.”
4. Pitkin, *Representation*; Ankersmit, *Political Representation*; Skinner, “Hobbes.”
5. Conti, *Parliament the Mirror*; Best and Cotta, *Parliamentary Representatives*.
6. Rehfeld, “General theory.”
7. Schwartz stressed the need to address representation as a process that transforms representatives and represented in Schwartz, *The Blue Guitar*. See also Saward, *The Representative Claim*.
8. Palonen, *Parliamentary Thinking*.
9. Carpenter, “Representation,” 55; Huzzey and Miller, “Petitions.”
10. Ilie, “Parliamentary Discourse.”
11. Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin, *Democracy*.
12. Garsten, “Representative government.”

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13. Sierra, Peña and Zurita, *Elegidos y elegibles*; Sierra, Zurita and Peña, “La representación política.”
 14. Zurita, “La representación política”; Inarejos, *Ciudadanos, propietarios*.
 15. Romero Salvador and Frías Corredor, “Política y campesinado en España”; Zurita, Peña and Sierra, “La teoría del gobierno representativo.”
 16. Manin, *Representative Government*, 94.
 17. Examples of Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1846–1847 legislature, 2–3 and 195–196; Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1850–1851 legislature, 349, 361, 417, 422–525.
 18. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1840 legislature, 2.
 19. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1841, 1915.
 20. Romeo, “De patricios.”
 21. Varela Ortega, *Los amigos políticos*; Tuñón, *Bloque de poder*; Tusell, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*.
 22. Guizot, *Origins of Representative Government*.
 23. Jennings, *Revolution*, 166–176; Te Velde, “Democracy.”
 24. Constant, *Principes de politique*.
 25. Donoso, *Lecciones*.
 26. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1837–1838 legislature, 28 and Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1858–1860 legislature, 2.
 27. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1844–1845 legislature, 2.
 28. Sierra, “Deputy.”
 29. Beyen and Te Velde, “Modern Parliaments.”
 30. See, Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1854–1856 legislature, 1–2; Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1869–1871 legislature, 1.
 31. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1869–1871 legislature, 2.
 32. Peyrou, “Democratic Discourse”; Peyrou, *Tribunos*, 122–123.
 33. Luján, “Con voto y voz.”
 34. Finlayson, “Democratic audience.”
 35. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1837–1838 legislature, 1023.
 36. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1846–1847 legislature, 39.
 37. Araque, *Las elecciones*. Similar practices which favour governmental candidates in Voilliot, *La Candidature officielle*.
 38. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1841–1842 legislature, 3503.
 39. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1840 legislature, 2531.
 40. Lawrence, *Electing our masters*, 14–42.

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41. Luján, “Absentismo y representación política.”
 42. Saward, *Representative Claim*, 35.
 43. Figueres’ (Barcelona) Electoral Act of 1850, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 44. Document 0041006010002, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 45. Document 0041034010002, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 46. Document 0041104010022, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 47. Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*.
 48. Agnès, *L’appel au pouvoir*; Palacios Cerezales, “Ejercer derechos.”
 49. Document 0041026010022, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 50. Documents 0041624010000 and 0041132010002, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 51. Document 0041628020000, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 52. Documents 0041602020003 and 0041628020000, Electoral Section, Congress of Deputies Archive, Madrid.
 53. Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*.
 54. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1846–1847 legislature, 821.
 55. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1837–1838 legislature, 878.
 56. Lauwers, “French Social Citizenship.”
 57. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1845–1846 legislature, 167–168.
 58. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1845–1846 legislature, 354.
 59. Finlayson, “Democratic audience.”
 60. Reid, *Imprison’d Wranglers*.
 61. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1841–1842 legislature, 2013.
 62. Peloso and Tenenbaum, *Liberals, Politics & Power*, 10; See also Lauwers, “Image et action d’Henri-Constant Groussau.”
 63. Luján, *Politización electoral*, 41–42.
 64. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1848–1849 legislature, 2562.
 65. Riquer, *Escolta, Espanya*; Veiga, “Estado y caciquismos.”
 66. Núñez, *Huelva en las Cortes*.
 67. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1864–1865 legislature, 168.
 68. Palacios Cerezales, “Petitioning.”
 69. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1850–1851 legislature, 604.
 70. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1861–1862 legislature, 1547.
 71. Spanish session’s record of the lower house: 1854–1856 legislature, 10286.
 72. Ihalainen, Ilie, and Palonen, *Parliament and Parliamentarism*.

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