



*The Effects of the Economic Crisis in the
Political Culture of Elderly People:
Spain as a Case Study*

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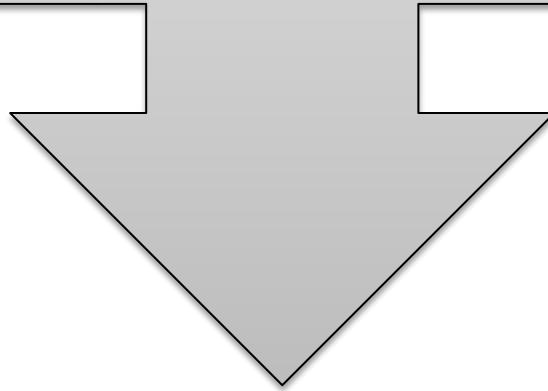
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I+D project:

***“Active ageing and democracy in Spain:
rights, representation and participation over 65 years.
A comparative study”***

- **CEU San Pablo University** (2012-2014)
- 15 researchers (Faculty of Law)



This paper analyses the political culture of the elderly

INTRODUCTION

- **What is the *political culture*?**

It's a collective attribute of the societies towards the political system

(ALMOND and VERBA, 1963):

1. Cognitive dimension (*know*)
2. Affective dimension (*feel*)
3. Evaluative dimension (*value*)

- **Hypothesis 1 (verified by other authors):**

There is an specific political culture of the elderly in Spain

- **Hypothesis 2 (new):**

The economic crisis has changed their political culture

- **Why is it important to study it?**

1. Few studies about elderly people in Spain in Social Sciences
2. “**Grey power**” in political terms (increasing **electorate**)

MAIN FEATURES OF THE SPANISH POLITICAL CULTURE

FRANCOISM (1939-1977):

1. lack of motivation,
2. disinformation,
3. political apathy

DEMOCRACY (since 1978)

1. **Adult political resocialization** on democratic values at a high speed
2. Patterns of **moderation**
3. Inclination towards the **centre-left** (the less conservative electorate of the EU)
4. **Limited knowledge** of the political system
5. Political **passivity**

(Source: quantitative data from CIS databank)



Table 1. Changing attitudes and political opinions. 1980-1989. Percentage (%)

Attitudes and political opinions (*)	Adult population (18-60)			Over 60 years		
	1980	1989	Change	1980	1989	Change
1. INFORMATION AND POLITICAL COMPETITION						
1.1. Political information	24	31	+7%	10	18	+8%
1.2. Political competition	22	36	+14%	11	22	+11%
2. WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS						
2.1. Sign a petition	69	75	+6%	46	60	+14%
2.2. Participate in a strike	48	65	+17%	21	45	+24%
2.3. Participate in a peaceful demonstration	58	65	+7%	31	45	+14%
2.4. Occupy buildings or factories	16	26	+10%	5	15	+10%
3. PERCEPTION OF VOTING AS A CIVIC DUTY						
	58	61	+3%	55	55	+3%
4. OPINIONS ON POLITICAL PARTIES						
4.1. Channels for the advocacy of the group or class	54	67	+13%	35	53	+18%
4.2. Channels of political participation	52	62	+10%	33	51	+18%
5. VOTING INTENTION TO LEFT PARTIES						
	29	33	+4%	17	27	+10%

Political culture in the 80's: Spaniards vs. elderly

- ✓ There's **not much political information** (elder people are the most uninformed)
- ✓ In time, **decays interest in politics** and increases **boredom** (specially among the elderly)
- ✓ People **are reluctant to participate in politics** (specially those over 60 years)
- ✓ General assumption **of voting as a civic duty**
- ✓ People over 60 years are less likely to vote for **leftist parties**

CONCLUSION '80s:

Elder people are more conservative, as stated in the topic, **BUT** in the Spanish case, **democracy exerts major evolutionary changes in the features of their political culture**, as a result of adult political resocialization on democratic values.

Political culture in the 90's: Spaniards vs. elderly

- **The establishment of democracy in time has not generated exciting attitudes towards the political phenomena** (the political disinterest and apathy continues in all ages).
- **However, it is a majority view that democracy is preferable to any form of government** (from 50% in 1980 to 80% in 1990).
- **It is also a majority view that our democracy has flaws,** being young people slightly more critical (and the less educated), than the block of over 65 years (and the more educated).
- **Existence of an electorate tending more to the center-left** (young people are more inclined to the left than those over 65, but no significant differences were observed)

Table 2. Political self-placement from the left wing (1-2 values) to the right wing (v9-10 values). Percentage (%). 1999.

	18 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65and above	N.A.	TOTAL	(N)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<u>Left</u> (1-2)	6.9	3.7	5.8	4.4	4.8	3.3	.	4.7	(118)
(3-4)	27.1	28.8	33.2	29.6	21.5	21.4	.	27.0	(671)
(5-6)	29.0	31.4	31.1	34.3	29.6	27.2	50.0	30.3	(755)
(7-8)	10.1	10.8	8.4	10.2	12.1	15.8	.	11.3	(282)
<u>Right</u> (9-10)	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.7	5.1	1.9	.	1.8	(45)
DK.	20.2	14.2	11.4	9.4	14.8	20.3	50.0	15.2	(379)
N.C.	5.6	10.1	9.1	10.5	12.1	10.2	.	9.6	(238)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	(2488)

Political culture since 2000: Spaniards vs. elderly

- **Interest of elderly people in politics remains low**
 - About 3% of those over 65 years would be very interested in political issues
 - while **more than 70%** of the elderly have low or no interest
 - It is a common feature to all Spaniards, regardless of age or sex.
 - Only educational level and a better economic situation accentuate this interest, although not significantly.
- **Political self-placement: centre-left wing**

Table 3. Interest in politics. Percentages (%). 2000.

Interest	People over 65 years (Average value)	Other ages			+65 years	
		65-74 years	75 years or more		Men	Women
Much	3.1	3.5	2.4	3.7	3.6	2.7
Quite	15.4	16.6	13.0	21.1	19.7	12.4
Little	27.5	28.4	25.7	40.1	31.8	24.5
Nothing	53.9	51.5	58.9	34.9	44.9	60.4
(N*)	(1129)	(752)	(377)	(4154)	(468)	(661)

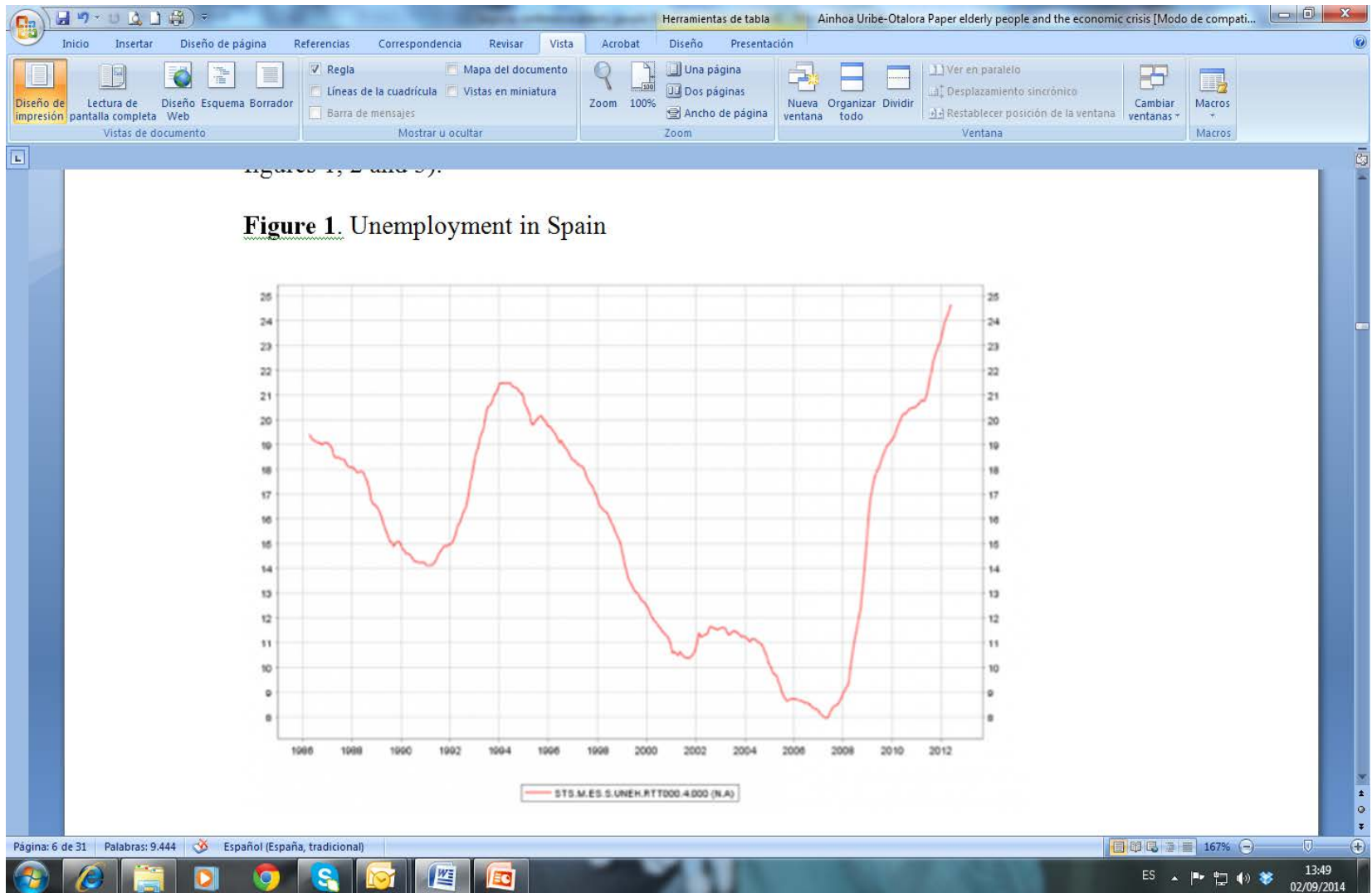
Source: Compiled from CIS studies number 2.382 and 2.384, February and March-April 2000, available at CIS Database website www.cis.es

(N*): Number of people interviewed

Table 4. Interest in politics for people over 65 years according to the educational level. Percentage (%). 2000.

Interest	Illiterate or lower primary studies	Primary Studies	Secondary Studies	University Studies
Much	3.1	3.0	7.2	13.8
Quite	15.4	16.4	27.5	39.7
Little	27.5	28.5	31.9	19.0
Nothing	53.9	52.0	33.3	27.6

2008-2009 THE CONOMIC CRISIS



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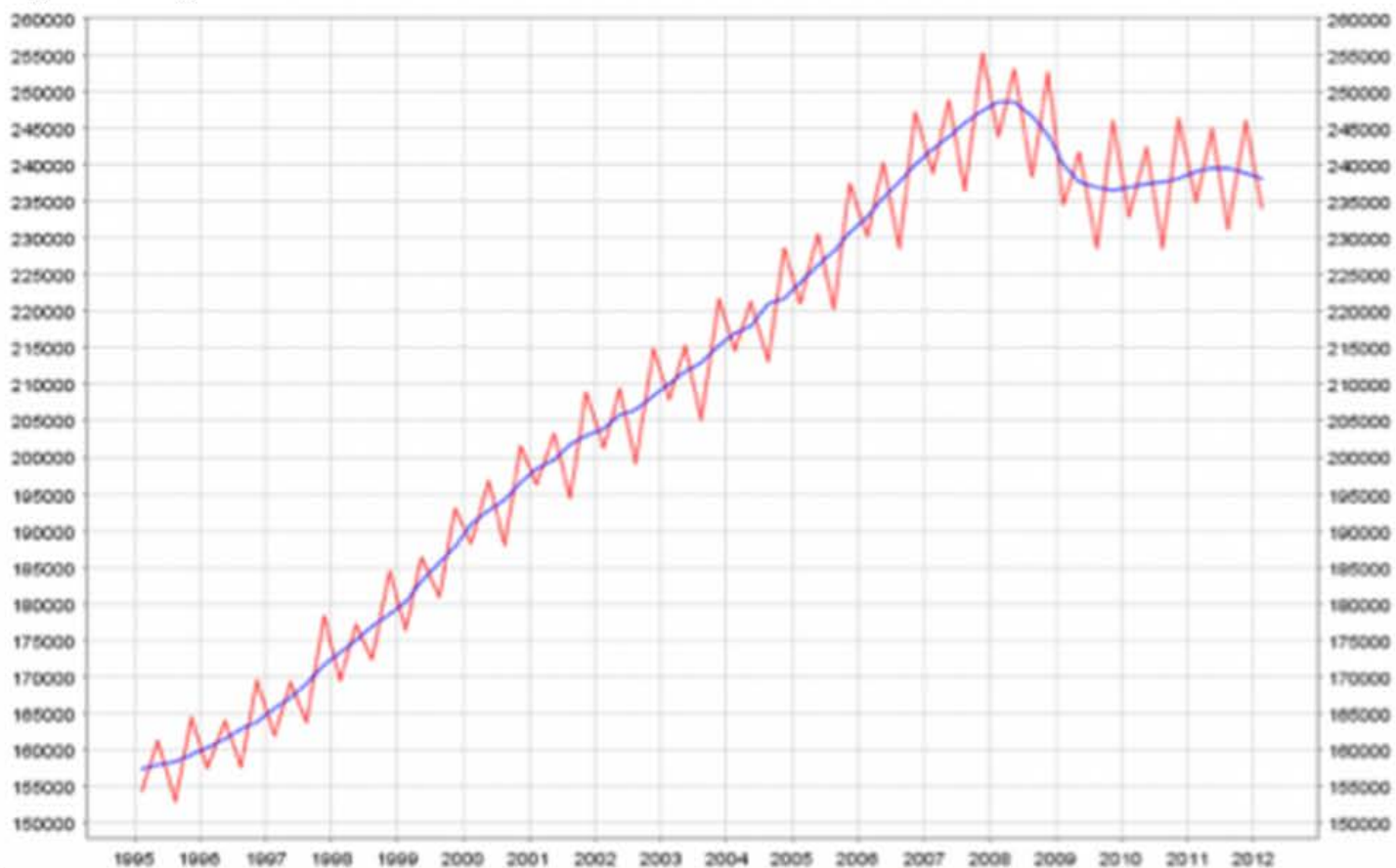
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Macros

Figure 2. Spanish Nominal GDP



- The socialist government tried to keep people calm about the economic crisis:

“I believe that the debt crisis affecting Spain, and the euro zone in general, has passed”

“Confidence has been restored”

(President Mr. Zapatero, The Wall Street Journal, 22 September 2010).

- But it did not work and there was a change in the next general elections held in December 2011.
- As a result, the People’s Party (*Partido Popular*) won and Mr. Mariano Rajoy became the new President.

Political culture: The effects of the economic crisis

- **Opinions about political parties in general, and about politicians in particular are now cruder** (even among the elderly)
 - Feelings:
 - *politicians do not care about citizens,*
 - *they are not honest*
 - *there is a lack of transparency*
- **Spaniards are more interested in politics (even the elderly!!!!)**

For instance _____ :

- **2000: 18%** of those over 65 were very or quite interested in politics
(24% in the case of all other ages).
- **March 2013: 50% interested (all ages)**
(14% very interested in politics)
(35'8% quite interested)

Table Question: Are you interested in the following issues? Percentages (%). 2013

		<u>Much</u>	Quite	Little	<u>Nothing</u>	D.K.	N.A.	TOTAL (N)
		%	%	%	%	%	%	
<u>Politics</u>	18-24 <u>years</u>	6.8	32.7	41.4	18.2	0.9	.	(220)
	25-34 <u>years</u>	15.1	36.6	29.8	18.3	.	0.2	(470)
	35-44 <u>years</u>	20.1	38.8	24.9	15.9	0.2	0.2	(503)
	45-54 <u>years</u>	20.9	39.1	23.4	15.7	.	0.9	(445)
	55-64 <u>years</u>	21.6	35.1	29.4	12.9	0.6	0.3	(333)
	65 and <u>over</u>	14.3	35.8	29.5	19.2	0.4	0.8	(505)
	N.A.	.	100.0	(1)

Table. Ideological self-placement in a scale from 1 to 10. Percentages (%). 2013

	Average	Standard deviation	(N)
18 to 24 years	4.58	1.76	(168)
25 to 34 years	4.73	1.86	(365)
35 to 44 years	4.46	1.81	(382)
45 to 54 years	4.37	1.72	(357)
55 to 64 years	4.38	1.77	(251)
65 and over	5.17	2.01	(361)
D.A	3.00	.	(1)
TOTAL	4.63	1.85	(1885)

CONCLUSIONS

- It seems that **the crisis has changed some patterns** of the Spaniards political culture, among which *elder people* are included as a distinctive subculture:
 - *they are still from center-left,*
 - *they still show disaffection towards politics,*
 - ***but now they are more informed.***
- **This phenomenon, eventually could lead to a greater level of involvement in political activities** and to greater direct or indirect participation in the political system, which would be a positive factor in the context of active aging
- **Time will tell if these changes settle or not**

Thank you for your attention

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