Democracy at Work: Pressure and Propaganda in Portugal and Brazil addresses democracy both as an institutional value system and as a practice. How are the media exerting their mediation role? How are the media re-(a)representing the political world to society? Are different media voices offering diversified and complementary perspectives on politics? How is propaganda perceived within different democratic and economic contexts? Is political trust and mistrust shaping the strategy of propaganda? These questions are addressed in theoretical and empirical chapters in a book that addresses problems which are in need of urgent discussion, as their impact and consequences are deeply transforming politics and the way politics is communicated, lived and understood by its main actors.

Within this framework, Political Communication Studies has a major role in identifying and urging new diagnosis of, and insights into, the political and the media systems, and, above all, how both the people and political institutions can both survive crisis and improve democracy in the Lusophone world. This book aims at making a contribution to that acknowledgment.

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CHAPTER 4
BETTER OR MORE INVOLVED IN POLITICS?
THE INVOLVEMENT OF PORTUGUESE VOTERS IN
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Paula do Espírito Santo

Introductory note

The voters’ relationship to politics is a classical issue in Political Studies and has undergone important developments on a broad and comparative scale. The citizen’s relationship with politics and with the political system have given rise to important concepts such as social capital (Fukuyama 2000, Putnam 1993, 2000), which is a specific reflection of social and political involvement and participation. When analysing the citizen’s relationship with politics and with the political system, we should consider political and civic culture concepts. With regard to this topic, we have seen a great deal of contributions beginning with Gabriel Almond’s pioneering article, ‘Comparative Political Systems’, which introduced the concept of political culture in the Journal of Politics, in 1956. However, the idea of political and civic culture has existed and has been expressed for some time, although not necessarily being mentioned by name (Tocqueville, Mead, Benedict) and it is an important conceptual instrument in relation to the individual’s relationship with politics and culture. With further reference to this relationship, several contributions have analysed the consequences of political participation from the civil

The focus on how, in democratic systems, people can effectively utilise the system’s political answers to their real needs and motives demonstrates a standing process of both adjustment and search, which represents a, permanently, unfolding path to that needs to be followed. However, In ‘The Role of Ordinary people in Democratization’, Welzel and Inglehart stress that ‘the development of effective democracy’ reflects the acquisition of resources and values by ordinary people that enable them to pressure the elite, effectively. The importance of this process, known as ‘human empowerment’ is generally underestimated’ Welzel and Inglehart (2008: 126). In other words, the human potential that each Nation contains the basic skills for a better democratic system. ‘Democracy can be effective only if power is vested in the people’, considering a ‘human-empowerment scenario that consists of three elements: action resources, self-expression values and democratic institutions’ (Wetzel and Inglehart 2008: 129). These three elements allow a political balance between the powerful elite and the will of the people which can operate at different levels, in relation to each Nation’s journey towards an improved Democracy. The most challenging feature of the process of democratization is that it is a major political challenge with what is, probably, a never ending outcome. However, the human capital strength obtained will be greater at each moment in History. As stated by Wetzel and Inglehart (2008: 136) ‘the major effect of modernization is not that it makes democracy more acceptable to elites, but that it increases ordinary people’s capabilities and willingness to struggle for democratic institutions’.

The importance of political participation is an essential facet of the way the political system, and the citizens in particular, understand and interpret their role as active members of within the State’s construction. In a period of time where there is a growing disappointment with the direction that politics and of the economy has taken it appears that there