

Populism, blame shifting and the crisis:

Communication strategies in Portuguese political parties



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Why Portugal has become an oasis of stability

Portugal bucks Europe's populist trend, but financial fragility remains a threat.

<http://www.politico.eu/>

Portugal's government

Austerity without the anger

Perhaps surprisingly, anti-austerity and populist parties are not doing well

<https://www.economist.com/>

Europe's populist backlash spares Portugal



Parliament in action: two main parties will stay dominant

<https://www.ft.com>

What about the communication strategies of Portuguese parties?

- To what extent have they remained immune from the populist contagion that swept over the rest of Europe?
- Did the recent Euro Crisis have an impact on their use of populist language?
- What kind of differences do we observe across parties?

Measuring populism

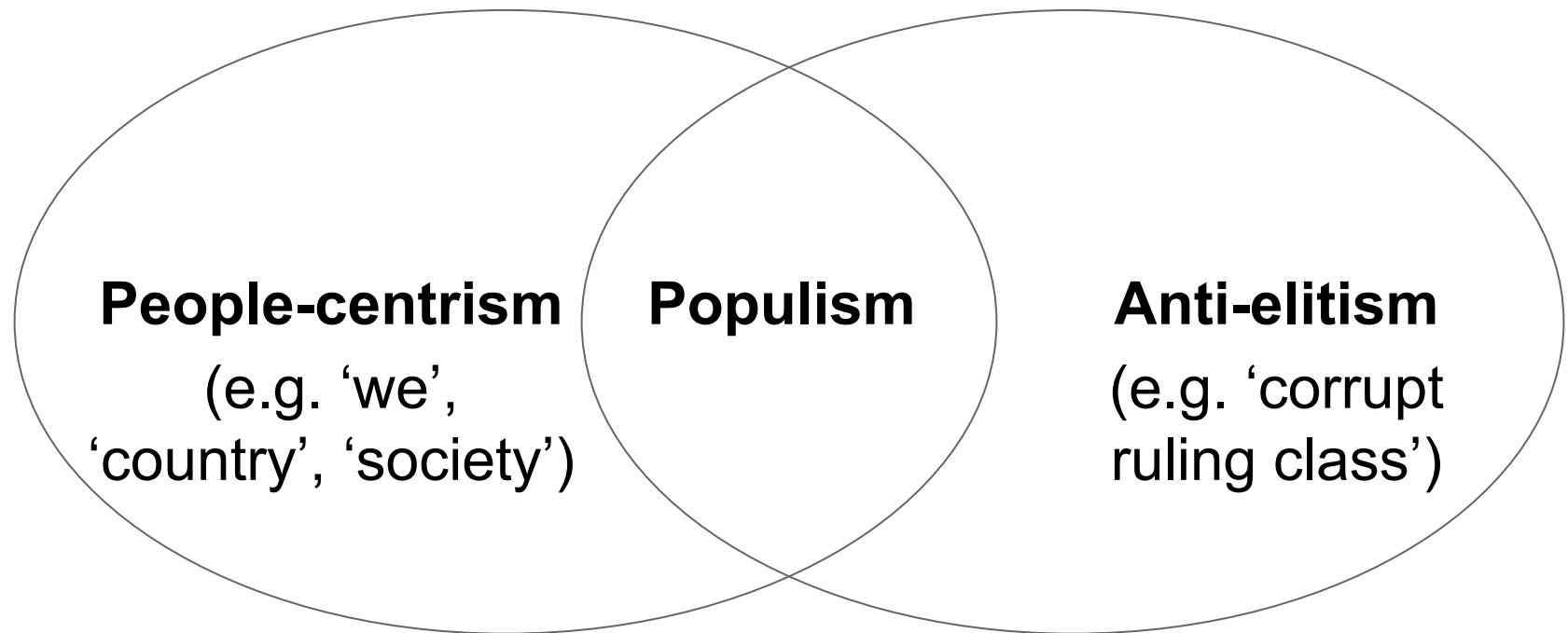
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, and Teun Pauwels. “Measuring Populism: Comparing Two Methods of Content Analysis.” *West European Politics* 34, no. 6 (2011): 1272–83.
- Electoral manifestos from 4 elections (1999, 2002, 2011, 2015)
- 2 human coders working on the same text
- Unit of analysis is the paragraph

The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realize his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Measuring populism

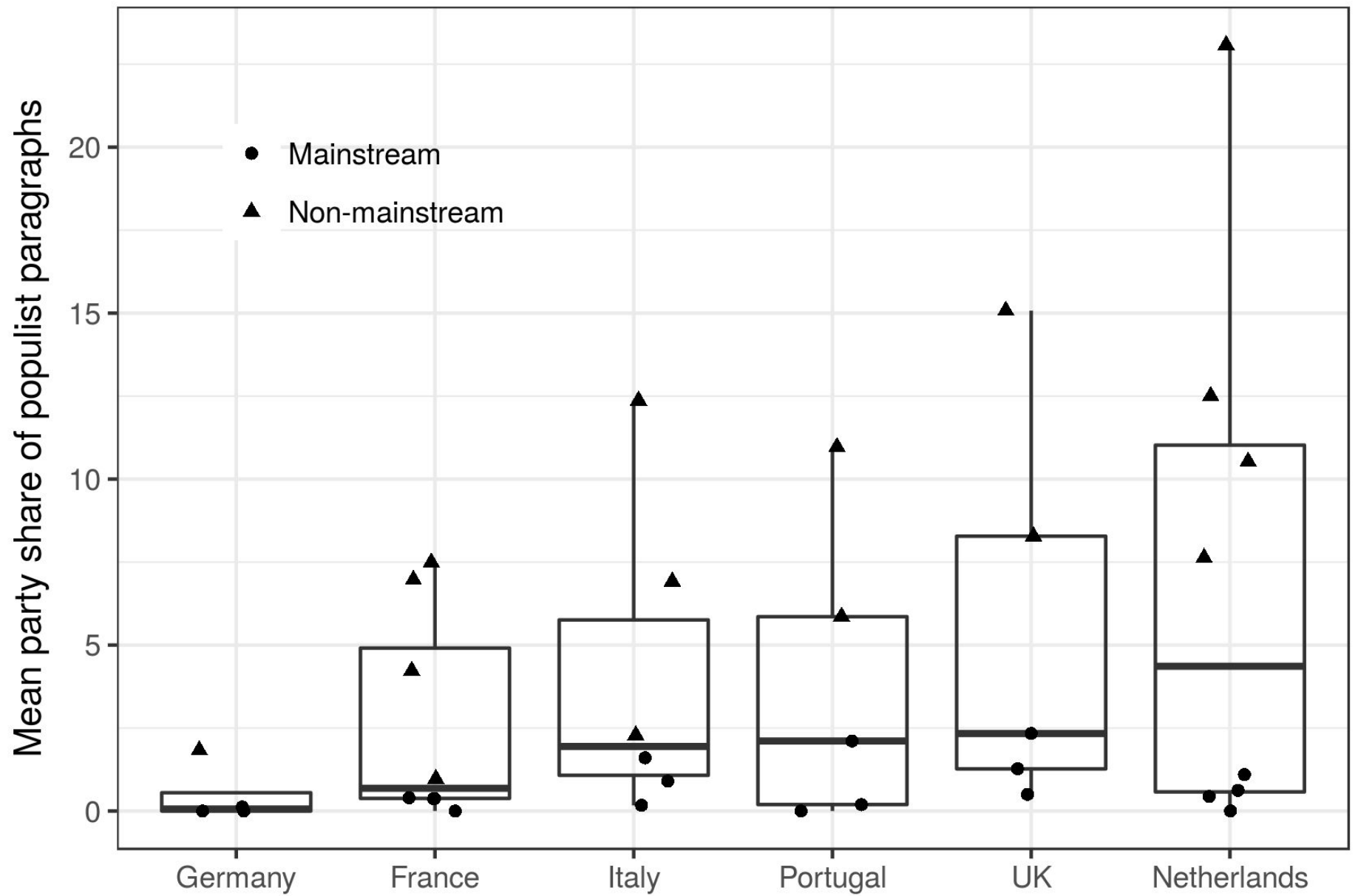


Rooduijn, Matthijs, and Teun Pauwels. "Measuring Populism: Comparing Two Methods of Content Analysis." *West European Politics* 34, no. 6 (2011): 1272–83.

Analysing anti-elitism

- Vasilopoulou, Sofia, Daphne Halikiopoulou, and Theofanis Exadaktylos. 2014. 'Greece in Crisis: Austerity, Populism and the Politics of Blame'. JCMS 52 (2)
- Unit of analysis is the paragraph
- Human coders looking for negative references to:
 - **mainstream parties** (PS, PSD and CDS-PP);
 - **challenger parties** (without experience in office PCP, BE);
 - **external elites**, which can be either international actors (e.g. EU institutions, International Monetary Fund, Troika), countries (e.g. Germany, Greece) or foreign elites (e.g. Merkel, Draghi);
 - national and international economic and financial **interest groups** (including banks, multinational companies, investors, rating agency, national trade unions, etc.);
 - **national institutions** (e.g. Constitutional Court, national parliament and government, parliamentary committees etc.).

**Hypothesis 1: Portuguese parties are expected
to show similar levels of populist discourse
than other European counterparts**



Rooduijn, Matthijs, Sarah L. de Lange, and Wouter van der Brug. 2014. 'A Populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic Contagion by Populist Parties in Western Europe'. *Party Politics* 20 (4): 563–75

Table 2: Comparing populist rhetoric across different Western European countries

DV = Share of populist paragraphs in the manifesto	
Constant	1.04 (0.89)
France	-1.76 (1.11)
Germany	-2.29 (1.50)
Italy	-0.48 (1.51)
Netherlands	0.61 (1.26)
UK	1.17 (1.29)
Non-mainstream	6.96 (1.10)***
R ²	0.52
Adj. R ²	0.49
Num. obs.	96
***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05	

OLS regression with clustered (party) standard errors. Reference category for state dummies is Portugal.

Source: Data from France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and UK are from Rooduijn et al. (2014). For Portugal (own data), we consider only two elections: 1999 and 2002.

Hypothesis 2: Portuguese parties are expected to show a growing degree of populism over time, especially after the onset of the economic crisis

Hypothesis 3: Mainstream parties are associated to lower levels of populism, while the Communist Party is expected to display the highest level, followed by the Left Bloc.

Party share of populist paragraphs

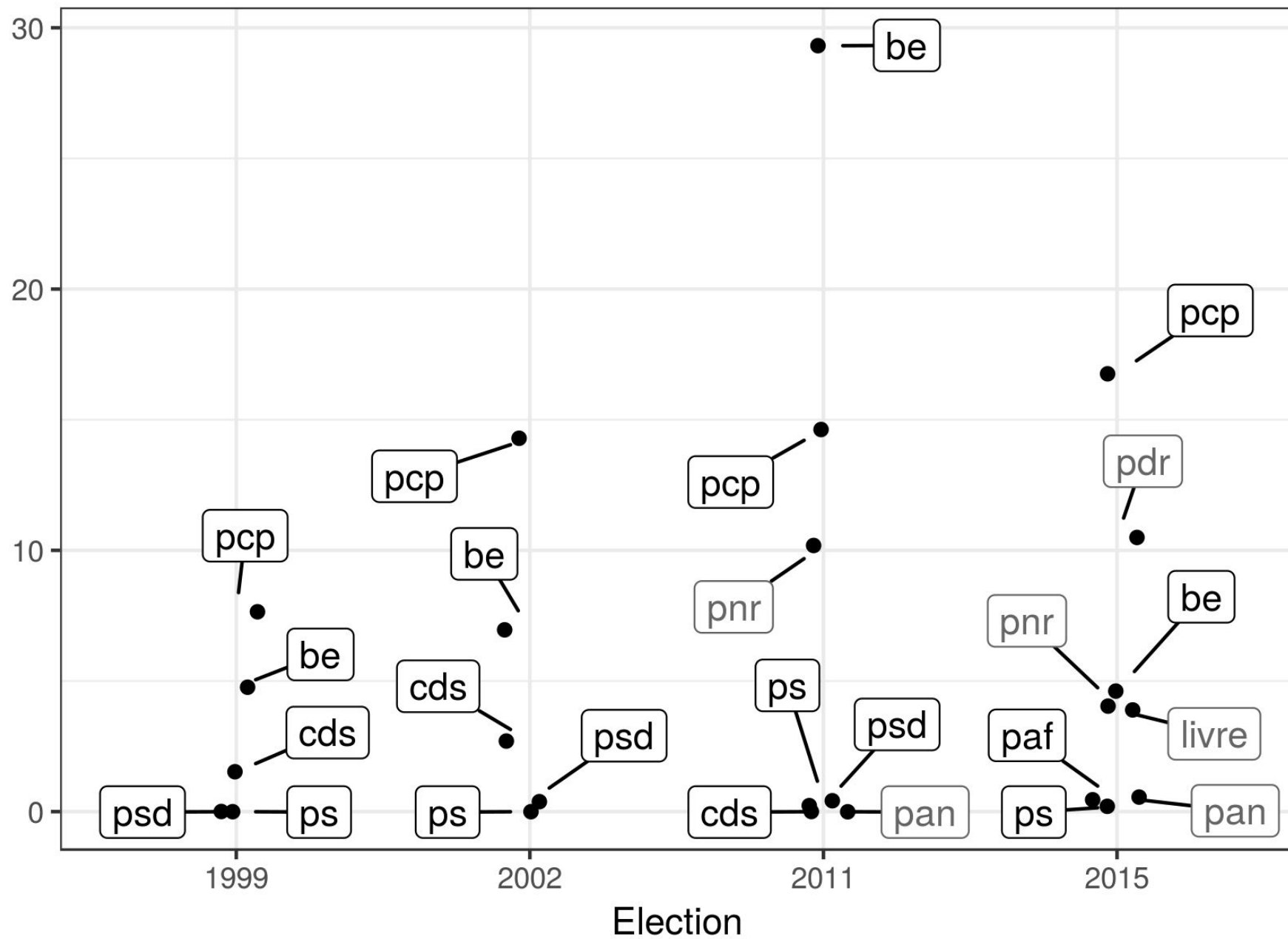


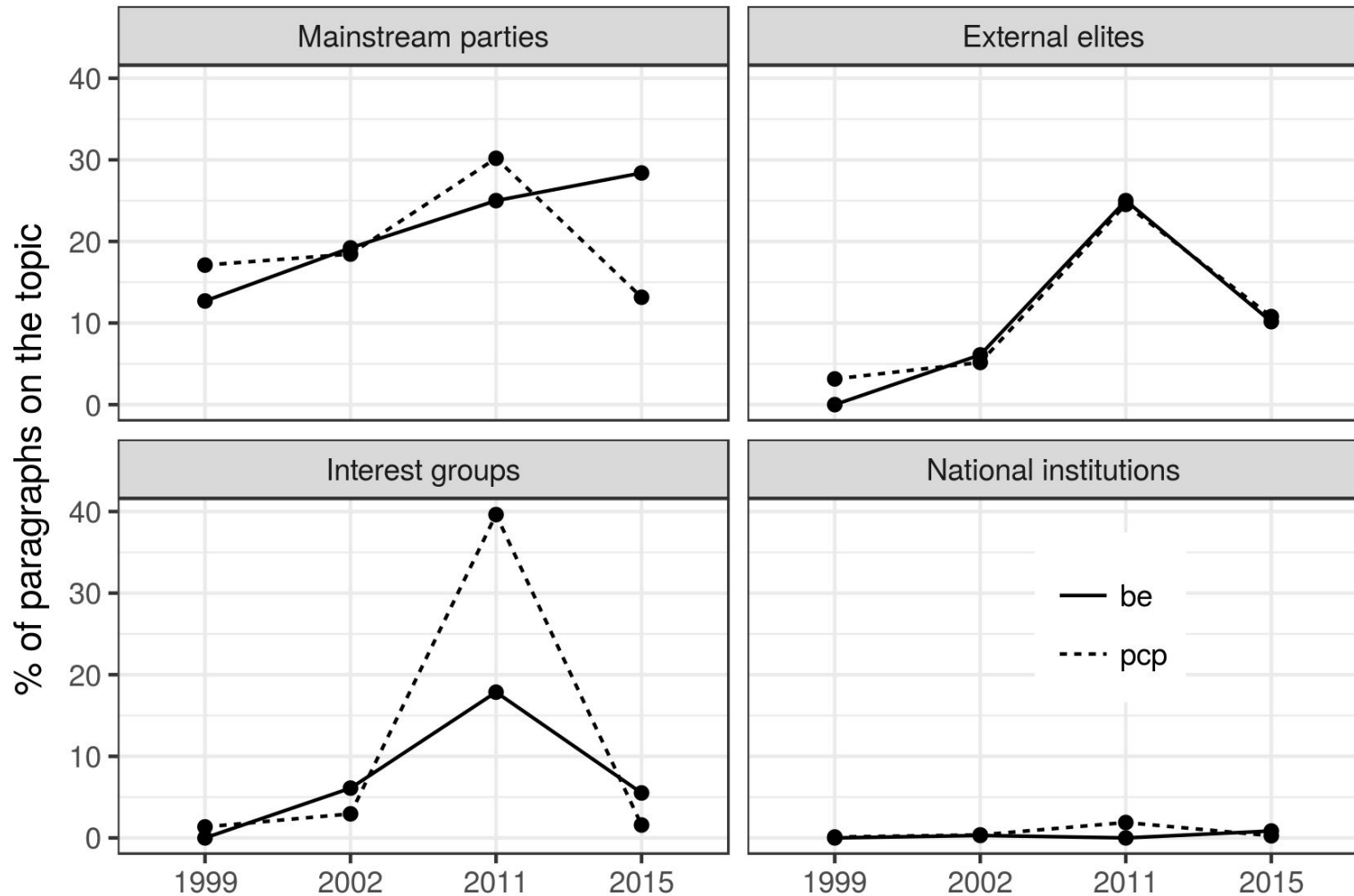
Table 3: The determinants of populist rhetoric in Portuguese election manifestos

DV = Share of populist paragraphs			
	Populism	People-centre	Anti-elitism
Constant	-1.95 (1.66)	46.78 (4.33)***	-3.48 (3.04)
2002 election	2.08 (1.27)	-11.25 (4.77)*	5.54 (3.28)
2011 election	5.43 (4.33)	-7.66 (8.69)	7.68 (6.19)
2015 election	2.42 (2.05)	-7.10 (5.30)	3.77 (2.98)
BE/PCP	11.84 (0.86)***	5.37 (5.18)	19.67 (0.54)***
Unsuccess Non-Mainstream	3.39 (2.74)	-10.08 (6.99)	5.23 (3.37)
R2	0.60	0.32	0.73
Adj. R2	0.50	0.15	0.66
Num. obs.	26	26	26

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

OLS regression with clustered (party) standard errors. Reference category for election dummies is the 1999 election

Anti-elitism in the PCP and BE



Preliminary conclusions

- Portuguese parties do not differ from other countries in Western Europe in their use of populist language
- The political discourse of challenger parties (PCP and BE) was affected by the crisis with slight differences
- No evidence that this type of communication strategy has become dominant, as far as electoral manifestos are concerned
- Yet Portugal is not immune to the populist Zeitgeist