

Constituency Characteristics, Committee Membership, Professional Links and the topic of Parliamentary Questions

Evidence from Portugal



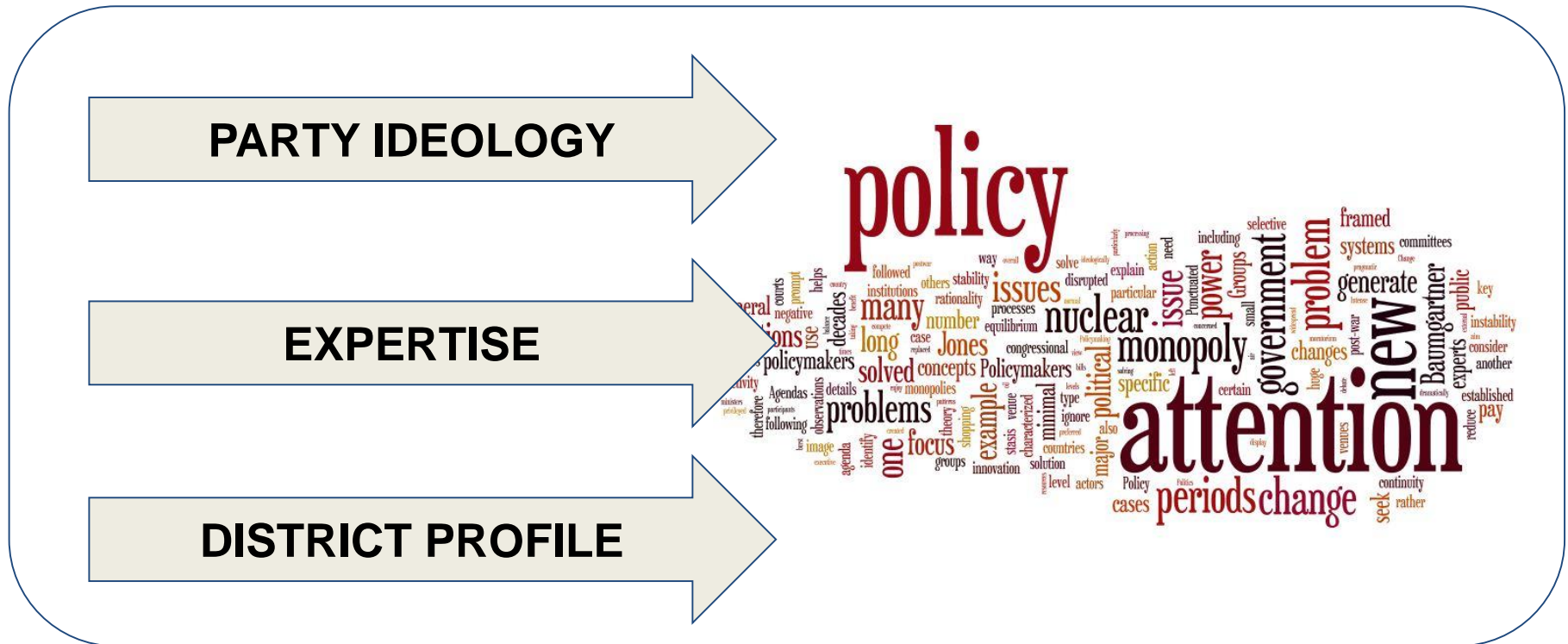
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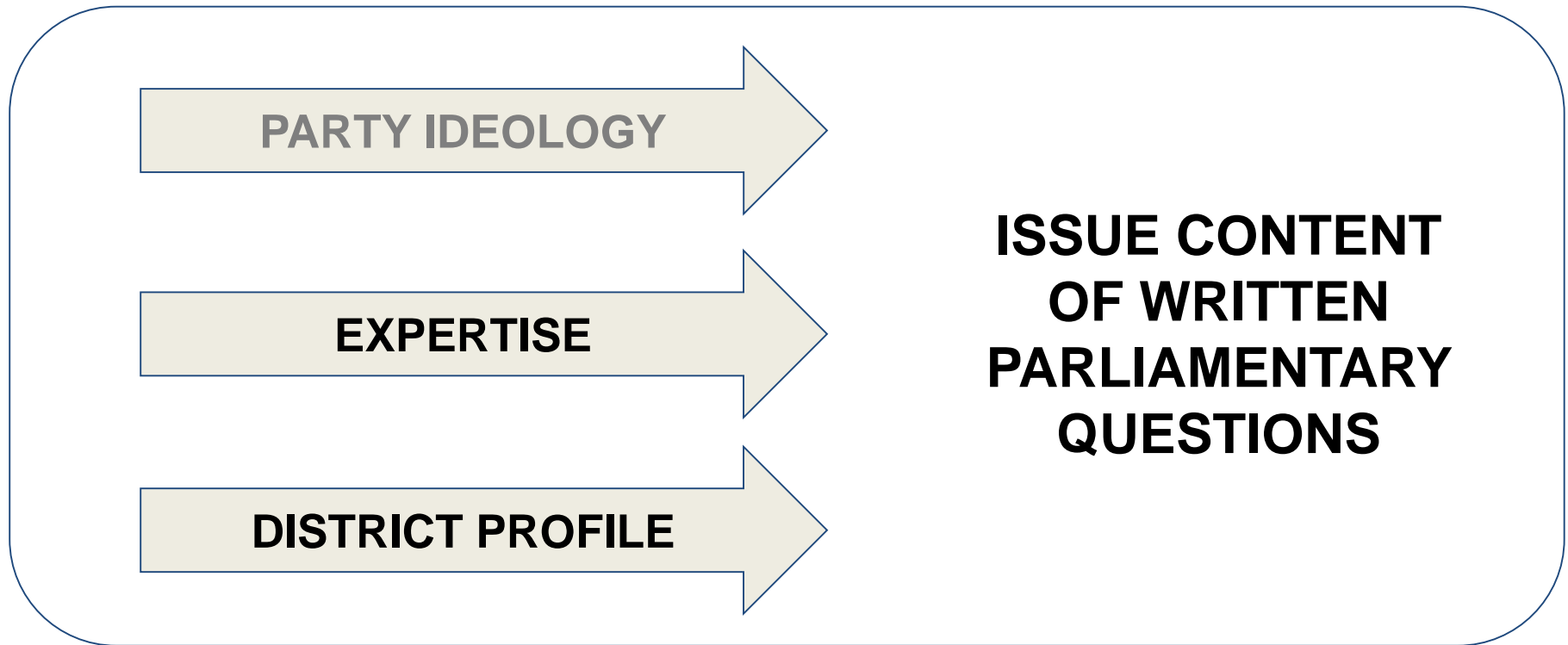


What factors drive individual MP's agendas?



INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

What factors drive the issue content of individual parliamentary questions in Portugal?



Closed list PR electoral system

Hypotheses

MP's expertise:

- H1 – MP's **committee membership** has an impact on his/her attention to a topic
- H2 – MPs' **professional linkages** have an impact on his/her attention to a topic

District profile:

- H3 - The **characteristics of the constituency** where the MP was elected have an impact on his/her attention to a topic

Data

- **~11500 written parliamentary questions** (“perguntas ao governo”) submitted by Portuguese MPs during 6 legislative terms in the 11th (2009-2011) and 12th legislature (2011-2015) + data on MPs’ biographies and professional careers
- The topic of each question was coded using the Comparative Agendas Project protocol:
 - EDUCATION
 - EMPLOYMENT
 - ENVIRONMENT
 - HEALTH
 - LAW&ORDER

	<i>COMMITTEE</i> (H1)	PROFESSIONAL LINKS (H2)	CONSTITUENCY CHARACTERISTICS (H3)
EDUCATION	“Committee on Education and Science“	works/worked in the education sector (teacher or researcher)	Enrolled students in pre-school, primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary education as a % of resident population
EMPLOYMENT	“Committee for employment and social security”	was or is currently involved in/leading a professional interest group	Unemployed persons registered at public employment offices as a percentage of resident population
ENVIRONMENT	“Committee for environment, territorial issues and local power”	was or is currently involved in/leading an environmental civic group	Environmental expenditure as a percentage of total municipal expenditure
HEALTH	“Health Committee“	works/worked in the health sector	Personnel employed in hospitals per 100 thousand inhabitants
LAW & ORDER	“Committee for Constitutional affairs”	works/worked in law-related professions (judge, lawyer, legal study expert)	Crime registered per thousands inhabitants

Control variables

- **DISTRICT MAGNITUDE (-)**
- **VULNERABILITY (+)** ratio between the position that the candidate MP holds in the party list and the number of seats won in that district by the MP's party
- **PARTY_POSITION (-)** is a dummy variable equals to 1 if the MP is currently a member of the national or local decision-making body of the party
- **SENIORITY (-)** measures the number of times an MP was elected
- **END_CAREER (-)** is a dummy variable taking 1 if the MP is more than 64 year-old at the beginning of the legislature
- **OPPOSITION (+)**
- **LAST SESSION (+)**
- **PARTY FIXED EFFECTS**

Dependent variable

Number of questions submitted in a legislative session by an MP on one of 5 topics

1. Same MP is observed over multiple legislative sessions
2. Over dispersed count outcome with excess of zeros

Hierarchical negative binomial hurdle model

1. Random intercepts for MPs
2. A hurdle model is a modified count model with two parts:
 - explaining whether an MP submitted at least one question (binomial logit) - HURDLE MODEL
 - explaining how many questions for those MPs submitting at least 1 (zero-truncated negative binomial count model) - COUNT MODEL

Term	Education	Employment	Environment	Health	Law&Order
Count model					
MP background	-	+	+	+	-
Committee	+ *	+ *	+	+ *	+ *
District	+	-	-	-	+
Magnitude(log)	+	+	+	-	+
Vulnerability	-	+	+	-	- *
Party_position	+	- *	+	-	-
Seniority	-	+	- *	+	+ *
End_career	+ *	+	-	-	+
Opposition	+ *	+	+	+ *	+ *
Last session	- *	- *	- *	-	-
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+	+	+	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	-	-	+	+
Hurdle model					
MP background	-	-	-	+	+
Committee	+	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
District	+ *	+	-	+	+ *
Magnitude(log)	+ *	+	+ *	+	+ *
Vulnerability	- *	-	-	- *	- *
Party_position	+	+	+	-	+
Seniority	-	-	- *	+	-
End_career	-	-	-	- *	-
Opposition	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
Last session	-	-	- *	- *	- *
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	+	+	+	+

Term	Education	Employment	Environment	Health	Law&Order
Count model					
MP background	-	+	+	+	-
Committee	+ *	+ *	+	+ *	+ *
District	+	-	-	-	+
Magnitude(log)	+	+	+	-	+
Vulnerability	-	+	+	-	- *
Party_position	+	- *	+	-	-
Seniority	-	+	- *	+	+ *
End_career	+ *	+	-	-	+
Opposition	+ *	+	+	+ *	+ *
Last session	- *	- *	- *	-	-
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+	+	+	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	-	-	+	+
Hurdle model					
MP background	-	-	-	+	+
Committee	+	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
District	+ *	+	-	+	+ *
Magnitude(log)	+ *	+	+ *	+	+ *
Vulnerability	- *	-	-	- *	- *
Party_position	+	+	+	-	+
Seniority	-	-	- *	+	-
End_career	-	-	-	- *	-
Opposition	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
Last session	-	-	- *	- *	- *
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	+	+	+	+

Term	Education	Employment	Environment	Health	Law&Order
Count model					
MP background	-	+	+	+	-
Committee	+ *	+ *	+	+ *	+ *
District	+	-	-	-	+
Magnitude(log)	+	+	+	-	+
Vulnerability	-	+	+	-	- *
Party_position	+	- *	+	-	-
Seniority	-	+	- *	+	+ *
End_career	+ *	+	-	-	+
Opposition	+ *	+	+	+ *	+ *
Last session	- *	- *	- *	-	-
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+	+	+	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	-	-	+	+
Hurdle model					
MP background	-	-	-	+	+
Committee	+	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
District	+ *	+	-	+	+ *
Magnitude(log)	+ *	+	+ *	+	+ *
Vulnerability	- *	-	-	- *	- *
Party_position	+	+	+	-	+
Seniority	-	-	- *	+	-
End_career	-	-	-	- *	-
Opposition	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
Last session	-	-	- *	- *	- *
BE	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
CDS-PP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PCP	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *
PSD	+	+	+	+	+

What drives an MP individual agenda in Portugal?

- Little impact of *professional* linkages and *district* characteristics
- What matters is the specialization MPs develop after being assigned to a *committee*