**An evolving EU engaging a changing Mediterranean region**

Jean Monnet Occasional Paper 05/2014

# Government failure, opposition success? Electoral performance in Portugal and Italy at the time of the crisis

by Enrico Borghetto, Elisabetta De Giorgi and Marco Lisi (NOVA University of Lisbon)

Lifelong Learning Programme

With the support of the Life Long Learning Programme of the European Union

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

Institute for European Studies

 ISSN **2307-3950**



Publisher: **Institute for European Studies**, Msida, Malta.

**The Institute for European Studies**

The Institute for European Studies is a multi-disciplinary teaching and research Institute at the University of Malta, offering courses in European Studies which fully conform to the Bologna guidelines, including an evening diploma, a bachelor's degree, a masters and a Ph.D. The Institute also operates a number of Erasmus agreements for staff and student exchanges. Founded in 1991 as the European Documentation and Research Centre (EDRC), the Institute was granted the status of a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in 2004. The Institute is engaged in various research and publication activities in European Integration Studies and is a member of the Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), the LISBOAN network, EPERN, EADI, and the two Euro-Mediterranean networks, EuroMeSCo and FEMISE. The Institute is also a member of the Council for European Studies (hosted at Columbia University).

The research interests of its staff include comparative politics and history of the European Union (EU); EU institutions; EU external relations and enlargement; small states in the EU; Malta in the EU; Euro-Mediterranean relations; Stability and Growth Pact; economic governance of the euro area; Europe 2020; EU development policies, climate change, international economics, economic causes and consequences of globalisation and EU trade and cohesion policy.

**Contact Details**

Jean Monnet Chair website: http://www.um.edu.mt/europeanstudies/jmceu-med/
Institute for European Studies website: http://www.um.edu.mt/europeanstudies
Tel: +356 2340 2001 / 2998
Address: Institute for European Studies, University of Malta, Tal-Qroqq, Msida MSD2080, Malta.

**Submission of Papers**

Papers are to be submitted to **roderick.pace@um.edu.mt** They are not to exceed 6,000 words including footnotes and excluding the bibliography.

**Citation**

Enrico Borghetto, Elisabetta De Giorgi and Marco Lisi (2014). 'Government failure, opposition success? Electoral performance in Portugal and Italy at the time of the crisis', *Jean Monnet Occasional Papers*, No. 5, Institute for European Studies (Malta).

**ADVISORY BOARD**



The JM Occasional Papers do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for European Studies but those of the author. This project has been funded with the support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Grant no. 2012-2690.

# Table of Contents

# Government failure, opposition success? Electoral performance in Portugal and Italy at the time of the crisis

by Enrico Borghetto, Elisabetta De Giorgi, Marco Lisi[1]

## Abstract

The costs of the crisis in Southern European countries have not been only economic but political. Economic crises tend to lead to government instability and termination while political challengers are expected to exploit this contingent window of opportunity to gain an advantage over incumbents in national elections. The current crisis seems to make no exception, looking at the results of the general elections recently held in Southern Europe. However, this did not always lead to a clear victory of the main opposition parties. In most of the elections, in fact, the incumbent parties' loss did not coincide with the official opposition's gain. The extreme case is represented by Italy, where both the outgoing government coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi – setting aside for the moment the technocratic phase – and its main challenger, the centre left coalition, ended up losing millions of voters and a new political force, the *Five Star Movement*, obtained about 25 per cent of votes. On the opposite side there is Portugal. Only in Portugal did the vote increase for the centre right PSD, in fact, exceed the incumbent socialists' loss. The present work aims at exploring the factors which might account for this significant divergence between the two cases.

## Introduction

The economic and financial crisis has taken its toll on all the Southern European countries. Arguably, the costs have not been only economic but also political. Austerity measures are by their nature unpopular and so is the government that has to implement them. Political challengers are expected to exploit this contingent window of opportunity to gain an advantage over incumbents in national elections. This is consistent with the literature on *economic voting*: economic and financial crises tend to coincide with a decline in the incumbent's popularity and its punishment at the polls (Lewis-Beck 1988). If we look at the results of the general elections held in the last three years in Southern Europe, the current crisis seems to make no exception[2]. No cabinet which had to implement austerity has been reconfirmed in office.

[1] This paper is the result of the collective effort of the three authors. Nonetheless, Elisabetta De Giorgi is particularly responsible for the first section of the article, Marco Lisi for the second section and Enrico Borghetto for the third.

[2] A recent comparative analysis by Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2012) found out that the impact of economic voting in the last three decades have been even stronger in countries of Southern rather than Northern Europe.

That said, models of *economic voting* in times of global crisis seem to be better at explaining the fate of incumbents than the reasons driving voters to reward a specific challenger. In fact, the punishment of incumbents has not always been accompanied by a clear victory for the main opposition parties. Rather, in most cases, crisis leads to "the growth of abstention, increasing parliamentary fragmentation and the emergence of new political forces, notably those expressing anti-party, extreme right-wing or even racist positions"[3]. These cases represent a conundrum for a rigid economic-voting understanding of election dynamics, whereby voters tend to reward those parties that are perceived as the most competent in managing the nation's economy.

In this regard, the Italian 2013 election is paradigmatic. Both the outgoing government coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi – setting aside for the moment the technocratic phase led by Mario Monti – and its main challenger, the centre left coalition, ended up losing millions of voters. On the other hand, in the midst of one of the worst economic recessions in recent decades, a political force without any previous parliamentary experience, the *Five Star Movement* (M5S), led by the Italian comedian and blogger Beppe Grillo, secured about 25 per cent of votes. On the opposite side of the spectrum there is Portugal. Only in Portugal did the vote increase for the centre right PSD exceed the incumbent socialists' loss at the general election held in 2011, which followed the socialist Prime Minister's resignation and the bailout signed with the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). What is more, the vote of protest directed to alternative parties has, if anything, shrunk.

This work aims at contributing to the debate on the effect of the current economic crisis on national election results by exploring the factors which might account for such a remarkable divergence between Italy and Portugal. Given a number of significantly similar conditions in which the elections took place, the main question to answer is: what factors drove Portuguese and Italian voters to react to economic concerns in such a different way? The empirical analysis focuses on factors at the level of: the economic and political context preceding the two elections, respectively held in 2011 and 2013; the electoral campaign; the electoral offer and the voters' behaviour in both countries.

## The economic and political context

Italy and Portugal are two of the European countries that were most hard hit by the international economic crisis which started in 2007. They are also two of the Southern European countries whose name supplied the first two letters of the sarcastic acronym P.I.G.S. for Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain[4]. These countries actually share some political and economic features. They are thought to be characterised by weak "institutionalised party systems, whose electorates nevertheless show restricted electoral volatility, along with ideological voting and extended political patronage. On the economic side, their structures appear weaker than their Northern European counterparts, with uneven economic developments typical of dual economies, large state economic involvement and reduced social

[3] Bosco, A. and Verney, S. (2012) Electoral Epidemic: The Political Cost of Economic Crisis in Southern Europe, 2010-11, *South European Society and Politics*, 17(2), p.150.

[4] The "I" refers to Italy, but it has also been linked to Ireland, which started to share with these countries the same economic difficulties.

mobility"[5]. In recent years, these common features led to nearly the same political and economic consequences: all four countries were hit by a dramatic financial crisis and had to face a period of serious political instability. Nevertheless, besides these general similarities, they show significant differences, which might help us to understand the reasons of the extremely different electoral outcomes observed in both countries.

*Short term dynamics*

Starting from the most recent political facts, the first factor to consider is the timing of the elections and the political events which immediately preceded them. In 2011 both the Portuguese and Italian Prime Ministers (PM) resigned, leading to a government crisis and their eventual replacement. This outcome was reached in two different ways though. On the one hand, a new general election was immediately called in Portugal (June 2011) while in Italy, a new parliamentary majority decided to support a technocratic government (November 2011), without going to the polls.

Portuguese voters behaved consistently with the predictions of economic voting theories: in times of crisis voters are apt to "punish incumbent parties either by voting for the opposition or abstaining"[6]. After the rejection of an austerity package – the fourth in less than one year – by the parliament, the Socialist PM José Sócrates decided to resign and the international lenders were called to the rescue in April 2011. A bailout was signed by the three major parties – the Socialist Party (PS), the PSD and the CDS-PP – with the strong opposition of the radical left parties – the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the Greens (PEV) and the Left Block (BE). Following this, in June 2011, the centre right PSD and the right wing CDS obtained an absolute majority at the general election. Portugal was the only Southern European country hit by crisis in which the incumbent's loss corresponded almost exactly to the opposition's gain.

The situation in Italy was different. First of all, the resignation of the PM Silvio Berlusconi was due not to a negative or no-confidence vote in parliament, but to a political compromise mainly inspired by Italy's European partners and diplomatically managed by the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano. The European institutions played a crucial role in supporting the emergence of a large parliamentary consensus both on the formation of a new government, led by the former EU Commissioner Mario Monti, and the adoption of economic decisions which could help to overcome the critical economic problems. As a result, Italy did not opt for an immediate fresh election, as Portugal did, but for the replacement of the government in office with a technocratic executive. The new government lasted until December 2012 and a general election was held in February 2013. In this case, beside the dramatic growth of abstentions, as predicted by Bosco and Verney[7], it was mainly the anti-party sentiment that precipitated the fall of both the centre right and centre left coalition – which had alternated in government since the mid-1990s – and which helped the astonishing success of the Five Star Movement. In addition, no clear majority emerged in parliament (notably in the Senate), with the consequent difficulty of appointing a new government in a short time[8].

[5] Bellucci, P., Costa Lobo, M., Lewis-Beck, M.S. (2012) Economic crisis and elections: The European periphery, *Electoral Studies*, 31, p.470.

[6] Scotto, T. J. (2012) Conclusion: Thinking about models of economic voting in hard times, *Electoral Studies*, 31, p.529.

[7] Bosco and Varney, 2012.

[8] The centre-left coalition, that obtained a relative majority in the Chamber of Deputies (thanks to the

After the re-appointment of Mr. Napolitano as President of the Republic – one further unexpected but somehow inevitable effect of the political chaos which followed the general election – the only government that could be formed was one supported by a *grand coalition*, composed of the traditional political adversaries of the Second republic – the centre left Democratic Party (PD) and the centre right Popolo delle Libertà (PDL) – and the new Lista Civica led by Mario Monti.

All in all, the first crucial difference between the Portuguese and the Italian case was the decision they took on the dilemma facing them of whether to call or postpone a new election after the resignation of their respective prime ministers in 2011. While the immediate election in Portugal allowed the voters to assign a clear responsibility of the economic crisis to the incumbent PS, the long technocratic parenthesis in Italy prevented the electorate from expressing a similarly clear judgement on the outgoing Berlusconi coalition. The broad (and rather nebulous) parliamentary majority supporting the Monti government, together with the non-political composition of the whole executive and the strong external pressure of European partners for the adoption of painful economic measures[9], made it very difficult to hold single political parties accountable for government actions, as happened in Portugal's case.

*Long-term dynamics*

Beyond the most recent political and economic events, there are structural characteristics pertaining to the two systems that certainly contribute to the understanding of the different outcomes in the electoral contests. Here we focus on the characteristics of the party system and the strength and composition of the executives.

Portugal has remained a multi-party system, with at least five parties represented in parliament, since the first legislative election in 1976. The four parties that emerged in the first democratic election still constitute the core of the Portuguese party system: the Communist Party (PCP), the Socialist Party (PS), the centre right Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the conservative Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party (CDS-PP). In between 1987 and 2005, the effective number of parties in parliament[10] remained quite low, with the supremacy in the Assembly (*Assembleia da República*) of the two larger parties (PS and PDS) which alternated in government. During this time we witnessed the decline of the smaller parties on the two wings of the party system[11]. The only significant novelty in the political scenario in the last years is represented by the appearance of the Left Block (BE), a radical left party that emerged in 1999 and still has a significant number of representatives in the Assembly. Apart from

electoral rules which assign a majority prize to the party, or coalition of parties, that obtain the relative majority of votes at national level) was not able to negotiate an agreement with any of the political forces present in parliament, in order to form a government before the election of the new President of the Republic, which was due in April 2013. According to the Constitution, until that election took place the two chambers could not be dissolved (unlike what happened in Greece, which faced a similar situation in May 2012).

[9] The growing difficulty of political parties to respond to voters and of voters to attribute clear responsability in policy terms does not originate with the global crisis, but well before. As asserted by Mair (2011), "at least in Europe, much of the policy discretion and room of manoeuvre open to governments has been severely curtailed by the transfer to decision-making authority to the supranational level".

[10] Laakso, M. and Taagepera R. (1979) Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe, *Comparative political studies*, 12(1), 3–27.

[11] Costa Lobo, M., Costa Pinto, A., Magalhães, P. (2012) The Political Institutions of Portuguese Democracies, in S. Royo (ed.), *Portugal in the XXI Century*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 23-48.

that, since the mid-1980s Portugal has remained a multiparty system characterised by a rather stable "effective number of parliamentary parties" (ENPP) with two bigger mainstream parties on opposite sides of the left-right spectrum. 2009 certainly constitutes a crucial year in this regard. For the first time since 1985, in fact, the PS and PSD together did not reach the 70 per cent of the votes cast and this result was replicated in the subsequent election, although with a diverse outcome for the two parties: the PSD had to agree to a coalition government with the conservative CDS-PP. This coalition is still in office.

The effective number of parties in parliament and their increasing or declining success can also help explain the changes in the strength and composition of the Portuguese governments. As we said, since the mid-1980s the ENPP has remained rather stable (and low) in Portugal and the PS and PSD have alternated in government and opposition. In 1987 and 1991, the PSD won an absolute majority of seats, which allowed it to govern alone for two legislatures. On the other hand, in 1995 and 1999 the PS came in office at the head of a minority government, after failing to reach an absolute majority for a few seats in 1995 and winning exactly half of the seats in 1999. PM Guterres resigned in 2001 and the PSD won the following election, without an absolute majority, and chose for the first time to form a right-wing coalition government with the CDS-PP, led by Durão Barroso. Also the legislature lasted less than expected, since Barroso was nominated President of the European Commission in 2003 and his successor, Santana Lopes, failed to complete his mandate. In 2005, the PS obtained an absolute majority for the first time in its history and led the government until the end of the legislature. In the 2009 election it lost a significant amount of votes, but it managed to remain in office at the head of a minority government. Hence, with the exception of the period 2002-2004, the two mainstream parties, PS and PSD, alternated in government and maintained their dominant position in the Portuguese party system from 1987 to 2009. What is not clear yet is whether 2009 represented the beginning of "a new party system realignment in Portuguese politics"[12]. This is especially true given the results of the 2011 election, which led to the formation of a new coalition government with PSD and CDS-PP. What can be concluded at this stage is that the stability of the Portuguese party system in the last 25 years, coupled with the concentration of votes in the two mainstream parties and the absence of any new credible competitor in recent years might be considered as one of the main factors which explain the recent electoral results in times of crisis.

The Italian case differs from this for many reasons. Under the new electoral law, an implosion of the core of the old party system occurred between 1992 and 1994. This implosion was caused by a combination of electoral losses by the established parties, judicial prosecutions (during the so called *Tangentopoli* era), party breakups and the effects of the new majoritarian electoral system[13].

[12] Costa Lobo, Costa Pinto, Magalhães, 2012, p.36.

[13] In the early 1990s a pro-majoritarian movement promoted a referendum, which was eventually held in June 1991,that abolished preference voting in the lower chamber elections. The result of this referendum (it passed with 95 per cent of the votes) had significant political consequences, such that the popular vote was seen as a vote against the so-called *partitocracy*. In 1993, the reformers pushed forward with another referendum, requesting the abrogation the proportional representation system of the Italian Senate and implicitly supporting its replacement by a majoritarian system that was expected to induce parties to coalesce around two main poles. This second referendum was held in April 1993 and passed with the support of 80 per cent of the votes. Therefore, a real reform was introduced by the Parliament in 1993. Italy became a mixed system, with 75 per cent of parliamentary seats allocated by a British

The 1994 election saw competition between many new electoral forces, some of which were established as a result of the breakup of traditional parties, while others were completely new. The 1994 election was won by a centre right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi. But the government lasted just seven months, because of the extreme heterogeneity of the alliance. It was replaced by a technocratic executive. In 1996 two large competing coalitions with an identifiable leader – the candidate for PM – fought the general election, which was won by a centre left coalition, led by Romano Prodi. However, only the 2001 election is considered as a real *watershed* between the old and the new political system[14]. For the first time, in fact, an incumbent government competed for power with an identified and clearly alternative opposition. This created a legitimate expectation of alternation between two different coalitions, which eventually took place. The centre right forces won the election and formed a new government, led by Silvio Berlusconi, which lasted until the end of the legislature. A few months before the new election, a new electoral law based on proportional representation and party lists was introduced in both houses[15]. The 2006 election, fought on the basis of this law, gave a narrow victory to the centre left coalition led by Romano Prodi. However, its Senate majority was so fragile that the new government lasted only two years.

But the bipolarisation of the party system reached its peak in 2008. After that election, in fact, Mr. Berlusconi and his party, the PDL, could rely on the largest political majority ever formed in the republican history and on a simplified governing coalition which included only one additional coalition partner, the Northern League (LN). Furthermore, the parliamentary opposition was composed of only three parliamentary groups: the centre left PD, the movement *Italia dei Valori* (IDV) and the centrist catholic party UDC. Yet, the illusion of a "majoritarian scenario" was rapidly dissolved by parliamentary practice and the persistent uncertainties of the Italian party system. A mix of internal problems in the main governing party (the PDL), personal scandals of the PM Silvio Berlusconi, political corruption and maladministration and, last but not least, the outbreak of the international economic crisis, led to the premature resignation of the centre right government in late 2011. Following another parenthesis of a technocratic executive and more political turmoil, the 2013 election failed to return a clear majority.

In sum, we can say that looking at both the short-term and long-term dynamics, although Portugal and Italy were both dramatically hit by the financial crisis the political impact in each one of them was markedly different. The two countries have faced the political events following the financial crisis in significantly different ways. At the same time, they show

style first-past-the-post electoral system and 25 per cent with a PR method. Beyond the electoral reform, many other political events occurred and contributed to radical changes in Italian politics in the early 1990s: above all, between 1992 and 1994, Italy witnessed the implosion of the centre parties of the old party system. "The implosion of the centre parties coincided with the end of the double exclusion of the communist left and the extreme right. Suddenly all of the parties gained a reasonable expectation to win access to government. In the new political landscape a bipolar competition developed between two broad alliances of the left and right respectively" (Verzichelli and Cotta, 2000, p. 243).

[14] Pasquino, G. (2002) "Un'elezione non come le altre", in G. Pasquino (ed.), *Dall'Ulivo al governo Berlusconi*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 11-21.

[15] A PR system with a "majority prize" of extra seats in the Chamber of Deputies to the coalition obtaining a plurality of votes at the national level, and extra seats in the Senate for the party obtaining a plurality of votes at the regional level.

remarkable differences in their relevant structural characteristics such as the party system and the strength and composition of the executives. Both factors have in the short-term and long-term certainly influenced voters' behaviour in the two countries and could help us better understand the reasons behind such different outcomes in the electoral contest – even in times of crisis.

## Between party decline and economic crisis: the road to the election

Two important aspects characterised the long-term dynamics that led to the electoral campaigns in both Italy and Portugal. The first was a decline in the level of government support, while the second is a decreasing trend in public confidence in political parties. It is important to look at attitudinal data in order to consider the impact of these fundamental factors on electoral results and, ultimately, on party system change. Our argument is that party crisis or decline in these two countries played an important role not only on political participation/apathy, but also on the punishment of the incumbents. As we will show in this section, there are signs of party failures in both countries, if we consider "failure" in party politics as the loss of the ability of political parties to build and maintain close links to the popular base, while at the same time generating negative sentiments towards parties in general. Our aim is to examine to what extent Italy and Portugal are distinct with regard to some indicators of party decline. After that, we will examine the context of the electoral campaigns, by analysing the main issues of the political debate and the performance of both parties and leaders.

*Political attitudes in Southern Europe: different trends?*

Our first indicator is the degree of public confidence in political parties. Generally speaking, if we look at Southern Europe we find that the degree of confidence in political parties presents a lower average than for the rest of Western Europe. While in Southern Europe the mean for the last decade (2003-2012) is 17.7 per cent, in Western Europe the level of confidence is, on average, 28.8 per cent (Figure 1, p. 20). We can also observe that Central and Eastern European countries present the lowest average, with a score of 13.4 per cent.

In particular, we find that Italy displays a decrease in the level of confidence over the last decade, especially since the 2006 elections, reaching the lowest score in May 2012 with only 4 per cent of positive evaluations. On the other hand, the average confidence in political parties in Portugal stood at about 20 per cent at the beginning of the 21st century, but in the following period it declined to 15 per cent. It is worth noting that also Greece displays a significant drop between 2009 and 2012. This corresponds to the emergence and deepening of the economic crisis, which led to the fall of the socialist government and the formation of the technocratic government led by Papademos in 2011. However, this event should be considered more as a catalyst than a causal factor of the decline because the negative trend had actually started in 2006. Finally, the confidence in political parties in Spain seems to be on an increasing trend until 2008, but after that it follows a similar downward trend as that in the other Southern European countries.

According to these findings, there is clear evidence that political parties in Southern Europe are experiencing a crisis among the

electorate. Western countries display short-term fluctuations in trust but during the last decade we can observe positive and negative trajectories. As Norris points out, "the net change in European trust in political parties proved significantly positive during these years"[16]. On the other hand, despite the low level of confidence, in Central and Eastern Europe there are less fluctuations. Therefore, growing negative sentiments towards parties is by no means a general phenomenon of contemporary democracies. Rather, it seems to concern specifically Southern Europe and it indicates a crisis of the role played by political parties in this particular region. Party failure seems particularly strong in Italy, and this may be associated with long-term attitudes of "anti-partyism" and the legacy of the crisis of the party system experienced during the 1990s[17]. This phenomenon may represent an important clue for understanding the difference between the Portuguese and Italian elections, notably the significant party system transformation that took place in the latter case.

Moving to the second indicator, we can observe that public confidence in national governments in Western and Southern Europe also displays clear, distinct patterns. While throughout Western Europe the level of positive evaluation presents a relatively stable pattern, in Southern Europe there is an unequivocal decline since 2006 (Figure 2, p. 20). All countries affected by the economic crisis – including Ireland - present a negative trend. Again, it is worth noting that the economic crisis is a catalyst of the decline in confidence, a deepening of the dissatisfaction with the executive. In particular, the level of confidence in Italy drops between 2006 and 2008, whereas there is a slight increase – followed by stability – after the 2008 election. In Portugal – as well as in other Southern European countries – the confidence in government falls gradually between 2006 and 2012. In most countries there is a slight increase when national elections are held, but this is a short-term fluctuation which does not undermine the long-term trend.

It is interesting to note that the level of dissatisfaction towards the government was lower in Italy than in Portugal during the period of the economic crisis. Despite the fact that the Portuguese government had to request a bailout and had to face a worsening economic and financial situation, characterized by higher rates of unemployment and a growing public deficit, the main political parties seemed to better resist the erosion of consensus and of their popularity as a result of austerity policies. Italian voters show more negative and intransigent attitudes towards the incumbents, even after Berlusconi's resignation.

*The electoral campaign: leaders and issues*

The analysis so far has emphasised the negative background conditions experienced by political parties – especially incumbents – in Southern Europe. We have also pointed out that there are important similarities between the Portuguese and Italian cases in terms of long-term political attitudes. However, if we look at the campaign contexts, we find striking differences between the two countries. In the following section, we aim to characterise the main features of the electoral contest, focusing particularly on the main issues at stake and the party leaders' popularity.

[16] Norris, P. (2011) *Democratic Deficit*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 75.

[17] Bardi, L. (1996) Anti-party sentiment and party system change in Italy, *European Journal of Political Research*, 29 (3); Morlino, L. and M. Tarchi (1996) The dissatisfied society: The roots of political change in Italy, *European Journal of Political Research*, 30 (1); Mete, V. (2010) Four types of anti-politics: Insights from the Italian case, *Modern Italy*, 15 (1).

The context in which the Portuguese electoral campaign took place was characterised by the deepening of the economic and financial situation, which led to the negotiations with the *troika*[18]. After the resignation of the PM José Sócrates (March 2011), the interest rate of public bonds rose well above 7 per cent, a threshold that, according to many observers, makes debt obligations impossible to meet. As a consequence, in April 2011 the socialist government officially asked for a bailout, which was supported by the main Portuguese parties (the PS, PSD and CDS-PP) in early May. Inevitably this became one of the main issues which dominated the successive electoral campaign.

It is worth emphasizing that the incumbent socialist government had to face an unprecedented deterioration of the economic situation. The unemployment rate increased from 7.6 per cent to 11 per cent between 2005 and 2011, whereas the government deficit went from 3.6 per cent in 2008 to 10.2 per cent in 2009 (9.8 per cent in 2010). On the other hand, public debt grew over the six years of socialist governments, from 71 per cent of GDP in 2005 to 108.1 per cent in 2011.

This political and economic situation resembled very closely the context of the 2010 Irish campaign, where the incumbent Fianna Fáil lost 24 percentage points and suddenly became the third party[19]. According to previous research, economic performance is crucial for understanding voting choice in Portugal[20]. Many scholars have pointed out that electoral accountability in Portugal has always been very high, especially due to the competition between the two main parties, which has made it easy for voters to punish (or reward) the incumbent. In other words, retrospective voting has been a powerful instrument that has allowed the electorate to express their dissatisfaction and to foster alternation in government.

Given this background, it is not surprising that the electoral campaign focused mainly on socio-economic issues, strengthening polarisation between the two main parties. In particular, two aspects dominated the debate and the agenda of the 2011 campaign. One crucial issue was about who should bear responsibility for the worsening economic situation. In this case, it was clear that the majority of voters believed that the socialist government was mainly responsible for the economic turmoil. At the same time, the two main parties competed among themselves in presenting the less painful solution for solving the economic problems and to consolidate public finances. While the PSD aimed to implement a liberal revolution by reducing state obligations and stimulating civil society dynamism, the socialists supported the defence of the welfare state and the maintenance of social policies. This strategy aimed to shift the attention of voters on issues that were traditionally at the core of the socialist programmatic stances[21], with the main aim being that of reducing their almost inevitable electoral defeat.

[18] Troika consists of the Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

[19] Little, C. (2011) The General Election of 2011 in the Republic of Ireland: All Changed Utterly?, *West European Politics* 34 (6), 1304-13.

[20] Freire, A. (2001) *Modelos de comportamento eleitoral*. Oeiras: Celta; Freire, A. and M. Costa Lobo (2005) "Economics, Ideology and Vote: Southern Europe, 1985-2000." *European Journal of Political Research* 44 (4); Lobo, M. Costa, and Pedro Magalhães eds. (2009) *As Eleições Legislativas e Presidenciais, 2005-2006*. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

[21] Guedes, N. (2012) Convergência ideológica? Uma análise comparada dos programas eleitorais do PS e do PSD (1991-2009)" *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 68, pp.103-25.

The Italian electoral campaign took place in a characteristically different context. Although the worsening economic conditions and the austerity measures implemented by the Monti government were important, overall they played a minor role when compared to other non-economic issues. In particular, the campaign was strongly dominated by the anti-establishment stance adopted by the M5S, notably the need to regenerate and replace the political elite and the privileges attributed to political parties. One of the main campaign issues centred on the abolishment of public funding for political parties. In addition, the M5S adopted a populist rhetoric not only because of its anti-elitist message and the dyadic separation between "us" and "the people" as well as references to "them-the elite", but also because they defended a different concept of democracy based on direct participation by means of the widespread use of Internet as a new tool for decision-making and the rejection of any form of intermediation.[22]

Related to the anti-establishment campaign adopted by the M5S, another important theme that dominated the pre-electoral period focused on the Monte dei Paschi affair which involved several bank managers in corruption. This scandal exposed the links between politicians (mostly close to the PD) and the financial business, and diverted media attention to the "usual" practices of corruption and patronage, which had characterised the transition period between the First and the Second Republic. As a consequence, this scandal increased the populist appeal against the political elite and eroded the popularity of the main centre left party, especially in its strongholds, with an important demobilisation effect among its party loyalists.

Another important campaign issue focused on the financial reforms proposed by the main political forces, in particular the idea launched by Berlusconi to abolish the municipal property tax (IMU), which was introduced by the Monti government. Although we cannot establish the precise impact of this proposal on the final electoral results, it is true that after this announcement the campaign of the centre right started to gain "momentum", both in terms of mobilisation and voting choice (Figure 3, p. 21). At the same time, the PD's lead on the centre-right coalition declined throughout the campaign. Meanwhile, the M5S was extremely successful in mobilising new voters and in gaining support among different groups of voters. Finally, the new political party led by the PM Mario Monti managed to maintain its support in the last phases of the campaign.

The last aspect to consider is related to the popularity of party leaders. Here we found that in the Portuguese case the socialist leader displayed the lowest score of positive feelings among the electorate, with an average of 20 per cent of support (Figure 4, p. 21). On the other hand, the CDS-PP leader experienced a significant increase in popularity over the last months of the campaign. It is worth noting that the main opposition leader, Passos Coelho, was relatively low in popularity, with an average score of 30 per cent, which was very close to the popularity of the two radical left leaders (28.4 per cent for the PCP and 27.9 per cent for the BE). However, if we take into account the balance between positive and negative feelings, the findings show that all leaders were relatively unpopular[23]. According to public

[22] Bordignon, F. and L. Ceccarini (2013) "Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics." *South European Society and Politics* DOI:10.1080/13608746.2013.775720.

[23] According to the data collected by Marktest in April 2011, the balance between negative and positive feelings

opinion surveys, when asked about their feelings towards party leaders, the majority of voters have a negative image of the main political actors. All the main party leaders showed a negative balance, especially the socialist PM who experienced a sudden loss of popularity with a decline of 40 percentage points in terms of positive evaluation in between March and April 2011.

The popularity of party leaders in the Italian campaign shows an ambiguous scenario. While Berlusconi was clearly the least popular, with only 22 per cent of positive feelings, the centre left leader showed the highest level of popularity with 44 per cent[24]. This was probably the result of two important phenomena. On the one hand, the PD leader Mr Bersani benefited from the primaries of the centre left held in November 2012, which projected the image of unity and cohesion of the coalition and increased his legitimacy. On the other hand, until January 2013 there was uncertainty in the centre right coalition on whether Mr Berlusconi would run for leadership. A long debate about the possibility of holding primaries – which at the end did not materialize – did not help raise the popularity of the main party leaders.

The incumbent PM Mario Monti displayed a relatively high score (33 per cent), which was very close to the popularity of Beppe Grillo (31 per cent). Therefore, the data indicates no clear pattern between incumbent and opposition parties. Despite this, when voters were asked who was the leader who inspired more confidence, the available data indicates that a third of them had no confidence in any party leader[25]. Overall, these findings suggest three important points. First, Bersani displayed higher scores of positive evaluations compared to other party leaders, even if there was not much enthusiasm about his candidacy. Second, there were no significant differences in terms of popularity between incumbent and opposition leaders. Last but not least, a consistent group of voters did not display any particular sympathy towards party leaders.

How can leader evaluation account for the different outcomes of the Italian and Portuguese elections? We believe that the Portuguese case was a clear example of strong anti-incumbent sentiments, where the rejection of the Prime Minister did not lead to strong support for the main opposition leader, but was an important reason for voters not to vote for the PS. On the other hand, the Italian case shows that there was a significant amount of ambiguity in terms of leader evaluation, not only because many voters did not support any party leader, but also because there were minimal differences between the popularity of the main political parties. As a consequence, these findings suggest that the clarity of accountability was higher in the Portuguese case, while Italy displayed a more blurred and uncertain situation.

## The electoral contest

The goal of this section is to analyse the divergent poll results in the two countries by exploring the impact of factors such as the electoral offer (the creation of pre-electoral

was -47 percentage points for Sócrates and -29 for Passos Coelho. Also the radical left leaders displayed a negative balance (-18 and -22 for Jerónimo de Sousa and Louçã, respectively), while the less negative feeling was achieved by Paulo Portas with -7 percentage points. The surveys ask voters whether they evaluate the performance of political leaders positively or negatively. The balance subtracts negative evaluations from positive ones, weighting for the number of responses.

[24] See IPSOS poll, released on 8 February 2013 (data available on www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it).

[25] For further details, see the data collected between January and February 2013 on www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it).

coalitions) and the reaction of voters to parties' strategic choices.

Italy has exhibited a lower level of institutionalisation of the political offer in the last two decades than Portugal. As emphasised by Di Virgilio, from this perspective the Italian case can be assimilated more to the experiences of new democracies in Eastern Europe, characterised by so-called "floating systems of parties" than to more stable systems working in geographically closer, Western European countries.[26] In part, this can be attributed to the two (1993 and 2005) changes in the electoral system, which forced parties (both the main and smaller competitors) to periodically review their electoral strategies and alliances. For instance, the introduction of a majority prize in the 2005 reform, at least initially, generated strong incentives for the two major parties to invest in the creation of large pre-electoral coalitions to win the relative majority among voters.[27] On the contrary, electoral rules were kept intact in Portugal since 1975 despite much talk on the need of reform.[28]

In part, what changed is the way existing rules have been interpreted and exploited by party leaders. Also from this perspective, Italy experienced more fluidity in the last decade. Whereas in 2006, the two major parties opted for the creation of over-sized pre-electoral cartels, in 2008 they chose to run "minimum winning coalition" alliances.[29] The result was a simplified electoral offer consisting in two different coalitions – the PD plus IDV on the left and the PDL and Northern League on the right – and two parties running alone: the more radical Rainbow Left and the Christian Democrat UDC.[30]

On the Portuguese side, strategic choices have been less dramatic. The convincing victory of the PS in 2005 (its best result ever in national parliamentary elections) allowed the PM José Socrates to run a single-party majority government. In 2009, the PS managed to grasp a narrow-margin victory, by "losing votes to the small parties while minimising losses to the main opposition party".[31] In both cases, no new alliances were formed, partly because the PR electoral system created low incentives to follow this path, and partly because of the

[26] Di Virgilio, A. (2010) "Cambiare Strategia a Regole Invariate. La Rivoluzione Dell'offerta", in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale se vi pare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, p.73; Rose, R. and Munro N. (2009) *Parties and Elections in New European Democracies*, European Consortium for Political Research.

[27] Chiaramonte, A. (2007) "Il Nuovo Sistema Partitico Italiano Tra Bipolarismo e Frammentazione", in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale ma non solo. Le elezioni politiche del 2006*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 369–406.

[28] Freire, A. and Meirinho, M. (2012) "Institutional Reform in Portugal: From the Perspective of Deputies and Voters Perspectives", *Pôle Sud*, 36(1), pp. 107–125.

[29] Chiaramonte, A. (2010) "Dal Bipolarismo Frammentato Al Bipolarismo Limitato? Evoluzione Del Sistema Partitico Italiano, in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale se vi pare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 203–28.

[30] The Italian elections of 2008 will be remembered for the prominent impact of party strategic alignment on electoral results (Di Virgilio 2010). Following the less-than-convincing 2006 election success, the two major center-left parties composing the fragmented Olive Tree Coalition decided to merge and create the Democratic Party. Furthermore, taking what can be described as a momentous decision, the new Democratic Party secretary, Walter Veltroni, opted for excluding the radical left from the pre-electoral coalition agreement, thereby ending the decade-long tormented marriage which had survived the last three elections. These choices induced Berlusconi to reshuffle the alliances in his own camp. First, he inaugurated a common list, the People of Liberty, uniting his party, Forza Italia, and its traditional partner on the right, National Alliance. Secondly, he revised his partnership with the riotous Union of Centrist Christian Democrats and opened his coalition to the Northern League.

[31] Lisi, M. (2010) "The Renewal of the Socialist Majority: The 2009 Portuguese Legislative Elections", *West European Politics*, 33(2), pp. 381–388.

reluctance of left-wing parties to compromise with the PS.[32]

The different recent trajectories of the two party systems can also be captured through traditional indexes of party fragmentation. Portuguese elections before and during the crisis did not achieve a major overhaul of the party system. The effective number of parties (measured in terms of party vote, see Figure 5 a/b, p. 22) marginally increased in 2009 due to the erosion of the Socialist Party's electorate (-8.38 per cent) and the parallel marginal increase of support for the BE (+3.46 per cent) and the CDS-PP (+3.19 per cent). This entailed a relative decline in the vote for the two major parties (-8 per cent), which reached its peak in the 1987 elections. But the loss for the PS could actually have been more severe were it not for the Portuguese electoral system. Since this consists of a PR based on the d'Hondt rule applied in a number of small-sized constituencies, there is an inherent tendency to over-represent the biggest electoral competitors. In the Italian case, the turning point was the 2008 elections, and thus it cannot be imputed solely to the new electoral system (modified, as already reported, in 2005). As already observed, in 2008 we assisted to a simplification of the electoral offer, which reflected itself in a lower effective number of parties and a higher proportion of votes directed to the two major parties.

We contend that the fluidity in the party offer is one of the factors which undermined the level of loyalty and trust of Italian voters (especially young voters) towards the main political forces. More specifically, it did not create the conditions for a smooth functioning of the accountability mechanism connecting governing elites and electors, whereby voters manage to confer a clear mandate and hold responsible the incumbent party/parties in government for the manner in which the country was governed. This should be read in conjunction with the recent emphasis on the importance of economic voting in these countries most hard hit by the Eurocrisis[33]. These dynamics contrast sharply with the stability of the party offer in Portugal where, in the last decade, votes have tended to shift mainly between the two main electoral competitors. Even when the executive had to rely on a coalition (2002-2005 and 2011 to present), the attribution of responsibility was not affected "because one of the parties (PSD) was clearly dominant".[34] Overall, clarity of responsibility has been historically high in Portugal.[35] Although more research is warranted on this point, we argue that this attribute might have worked towards containing the protest vote and its dispersion towards third parties.

Another dimension to consider is how voters responded to this variation in the electoral offer. The first factor to be analysed is the increase in voting abstention experienced by both countries. The first point is that the record of non-participation in legislative elections in the two countries has been historically different. From the post-war years to the end of the 1970s, the Italian abstention rate has been comparatively one of the lowest in the Western

[32] Since 1987, besides the three single party majorities and three minority governments, there have been only two coalition governments (2002 and 2011), both formed after elections by the PSD and the CDS-PP.

[33] See the *Electoral Studies* special issue published in 2012, 28 (2).

[34] Freire, A. and Santana-Pereira, J. (2012) "Economic Voting in Portugal, 2002–2009", *Electoral Studies* 31(3), p.510.

[35] Van Der Brug, W., Van der Eijk, C. and Franklin M. (2007) *The Economy and the Vote*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. P.154

world.[36] Conversely, Portugal has stood out for a relatively high expansion of the abstention rate since its first democratic election in April 1975, especially during the 1980s and 1990s.[37] In the last two elections, the percentage of those who did not vote climbed to 41.9 per cent in Portugal and 25 per cent in Italy. In both cases, the so-called "party of abstention" ended up constituting the stronger "party" in the country.

In Figure 6a and 6b (p. 23), the polynomial trend lines used to describe the fluctuation over time in abstention rates, reveal the existence of different patterns. While in Italy the rate of change approximates a linear trend, the Portuguese one increases exponentially in the beginning and then levels out in the last decade.[38] While in both elections there was an increase in abstention, this was more accentuated in Italy: +5,5 per cent with respect to 2008.[39] What is more, this increase might have been bigger were the election not occurring at the end of a full 5-year mandate and had there been no new political parties entering the competition with respect to 2009. We suggest that this result might be read in conjunction with the sharp decline of trust in Italian parties after 2010 reported in Figure 1 (-15 per cent between May 2010 and May 2012). In other words, the non-voting decision might be associated with an increase in popular disaffection with party elites. Remarkably, this does not appear to be the case in Portugal, where both the trust in political parties and the abstention rate are low and rather stable in the last decade. We suggest that given its already high level, the abstention was no longer conceived as an effective protest tool. Rather, people preferred to cast an invalid vote (invalid votes increased by almost 1.2 per cent between 2002 and 2011).

The second factor of change is the increase in the level of electoral volatility. In Italy, the distribution of votes across party families (Figure 7, p. 24) during the 2006 elections still displayed a strong aggregation capacity around the centre left and centre right coalitions, respectively led by Romani Prodi and Silvio Berlusconi. This result was taken as evidence of the institutionalisation of a decade-long process of bipolarisation of the Italian party system, the outcome of a process which started in 1994 with the inauguration of a new mixed electoral system. This tendency towards a simplification in the composition of the electorate survived the reintroduction of a PR system in 2006: in fact, it seemed to gain in strength after 2008 with the exclusion from parliament, for the first time since the end of World War II, of the Communist Party. But, clearly, this trend was short-lived. In 2013, we witness a substantial downsizing of the two traditional poles and the appearance of two new challengers: Lista Civica and M5S. They defied Italian bipolar structure of party competition by running as outsiders against the main electoral cartels of the centre left and centre right. The electoral alliance supporting Mario Monti gathered a heterogeneous list of centrist parties behind a largely liberal pro-European program. Their result was not outstanding: they obtained the support of around 10 per cent of voters, which weakened their coalition potential in the new parliament.

[36] Tuorto, D. (2011) "La Partecipazione Al Voto", in P. Bellucci and P. Segatti (eds.) *Votare in Italia: 1968-2008*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 53–79.

[37] Freire, A. and Magalhães, P. (2002) "A Abstenção Eleitoral Em Portugal", Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais Lisbon.

[38] In both cases, the recourse to a polynomial interpolation (n=2) yielded a slightly higher R square in comparison with the linear and logarithmic interpolation.

[39] This percentage corresponds to almost 2470000 voters not going to the poll, a figure which cannot be justified by -3 per cent in the voting population (136000 voters).

On the other hand, the "movement" led by Grillo stood out for defiantly refusing to be categorized in a particular European political family. In a context as fluid as the Italian one in 2013, this represented an added value and contributed to its success. As revealed by post-electoral surveys published by the Cattaneo Research Institute in 2013, its 8 million votes were collected across the whole peninsula and from the whole political spectrum.[40] It won the support of both the former PD and Northern League voters in northern and central of Italy, while in the south it mainly gained followers among the centre right electorate. Furthermore, it was successful among both far-right and radical-left voters. On the other hand, it is less clear whether it managed to rally support among citizens who decided not to vote in previous elections. This unforeseen catch-all capacity signals that the vote for M5S was first and foremost a vote "against" mainstream parties rather than a vote "for" a particular political project.

Most importantly, it should be taken as evidence that the foundations of Italian politics entered a process of profound destabilisation after 2008, with almost one PDL voter out of two and one PD voter out of three not re-confirming their vote in 2013. In comparison, the electoral volatility exhibited in Portugal is less dramatic, with only a marginal increase in the last elections (Figure 8, p. 24).[41] In particular, smaller parties failed to attract unsatisfied voters who had previously voted for the two major parties. The Communists confirmed their incapacity to appeal to wider audiences than their traditional voters. But the greatest setback was in the BE camp. While faring surprisingly well in recent elections, it did not manage to retain its electoral base in 2011 part of which opted for abstention.[42]

## Conclusions

Portuguese and Italian voters woke up the morning after Election Day facing rather different scenarios. Portuguese polls brought no surprises: the incumbent lost to the main challenger. This was a classic case of alternation in government, where apparently economic concerns extensively weighed on the decision of the PS electors to punish Socrates' executive. Conversely, Italy experienced a political earthquake, whose magnitude can only be compared to that recorded during the political elections back in 1994. The XVII legislature promises to be nothing but a watershed in Italian politics. The party system shifted from a bipolar configuration to a tripolar (if not a quadripolar) one. The new and eclectic political movement led by Beppe Grillo, which up to then had only competed in relatively recent local and regional elections, is now representing more than one fourth of voters at the national level. The goal of this working paper was to analyse the factors leading to the divergent poll results in the two countries.

Starting from long-term factors, we have seen that the Italian political system has been traditionally characterised by a lower level of

[40] Istituto Cattaneo (2013) "I flussi elettorali in 11 città", Press release available at: http://www.cattaneo.org/images/comunicati_stampa/Analisi%20Istituto%20Cattaneo%20-%20Elezioni%20politiche%202013%20-%20Flussi%20elettorali%20in%2011%20citt%2015.03.13.pdf (last time checked: 11/06/2013).

[41] The Pedersen's "Total electoral volatility" index calculates the aggregate value of all gains and all losses between two elections. Pedersen, Mogens N. (1979) "The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility", *European Journal of Political Research*, 7(1), pp. 1–26.

[42] Magalhães, P. (2012), "After the Bailout: Responsibility, Policy, and Valence in the Portuguese Legislative Election of June 2011", *South European Society and Politics*, 17(2), pp. 309–27.

party institutionalisation than its Portuguese counterpart. In part, this has contributed to create a fertile ground for the intensification of anti-party sentiments[43]. Although the level of confidence in political parties is relatively low also in Portugal – as in other Southern European countries – compared to old Western democracies, populist or anti-establishment forces are virtually absent and the main political parties seem to benefit from an important reservoir of popular consensus. In part, this undermined the formation of clear lines of accountability between governing elites and the electorate. In this sense, the widespread distrust in political parties' capacity to govern the economy in times of crisis was, if ever, strengthened by the period of technocratic government. The grand coalition sustaining the Monti government further blurred the division between incumbent and challenger, between who was responsible for leading the country into recession and alternative political forces.

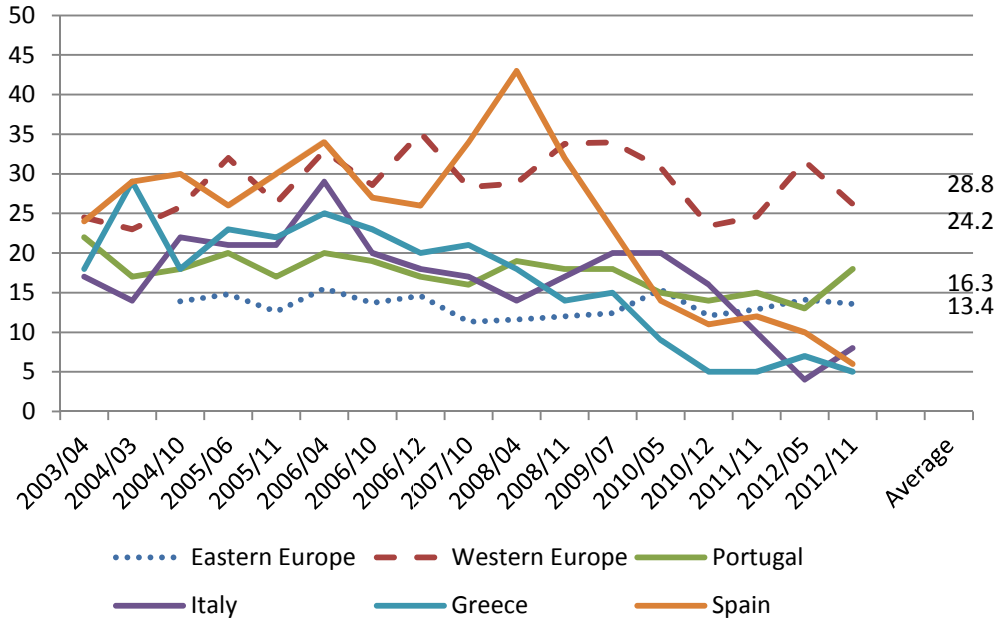
On the other hand, we must also take into consideration the short-term context in order to account for the different results of the two elections. The Portuguese campaign was clearly centred on the issue of responsibility: the incumbent PS tried to blame the PSD and its decision to reject the last austerity package for the worsening of the economic situation, while the PSD focused its campaign on the PM's incapability in managing the financial crisis. However, a very high proportion of voters believed that both the austerity measures and the bailout programme were inevitable in order to solve the economic situation, thus placing the burden of responsibility on both mainstream parties. According to recent data published by Moury and Freire, in 2012 approximately 57 per cent of voters considered that the government was right to sign the bailout agreement.[44] This may explain why radical left parties, unlike the Greek case, did not succeed in politicising the cleavage between those in favour and those against the troika intervention. Although economic and financial issues have also played an important role in the Italian case, it was difficult for voters to use economic cues to evaluate the performance of either the main parties or the technocratic government. Rather, economic issues entered the campaign mainly as a component of prospective voting, which requires a lower degree of information and depends more heavily on leaders' image and media discourse. This means that in the Italian case retrospective responsibility was blurred, thus reducing electoral accountability and the punishment-reward mechanisms.

Finally, the analysis of the mechanics of electoral change points to three factors underlying the divergent electoral outcomes in the two countries. First, once again it was pointed out that the low institutionalisation of the political offer in Italy compared to Portugal might have contributed to obfuscate the lines of accountability between voters and representatives. Second, Italy had to face an unprecedented surge in abstention, whereas protest votes in Portugal were also channelled through invalid votes. Third, electoral volatility in Portugal did not favour third parties, while the anti-system stance of the M5S in Italy managed to cast a wider net and fish for voters from almost every political area.

[43] In part, the transformation of the main political parties, notably their presidentialisation, which followed the emergence of Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the attempt made by other parties – from both the left and the right – to imitate not only its hierarchical and leader-centred structure, but also its populist rhetoric, has certainly strengthened the appeal of anti-party movements.

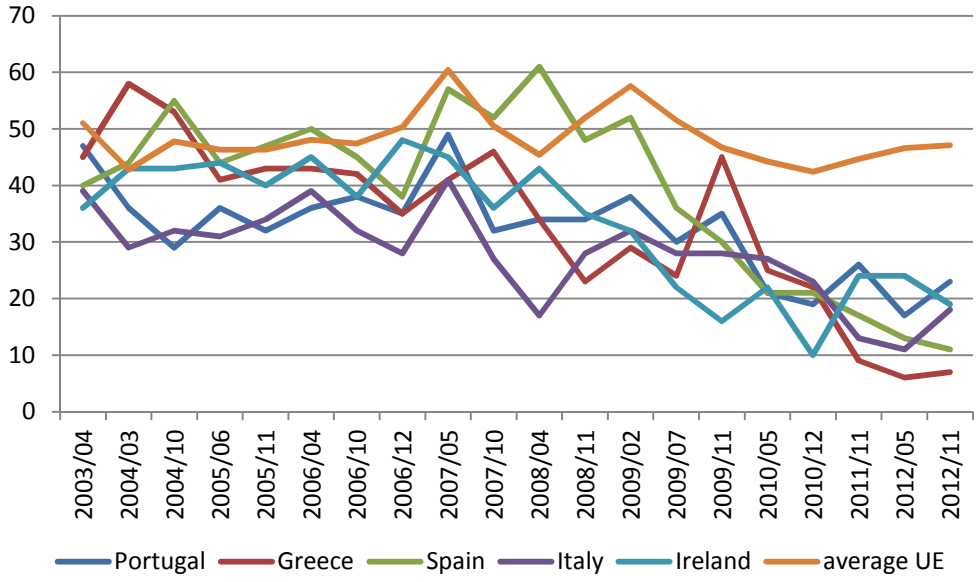
[44] Moury, C. and A. Freire (2013), "Austerity Policies and Politics: the case of Portugal", *Pôle Sud* (forthcoming).

Figure 1. Confidence in political parties (2003-2012)



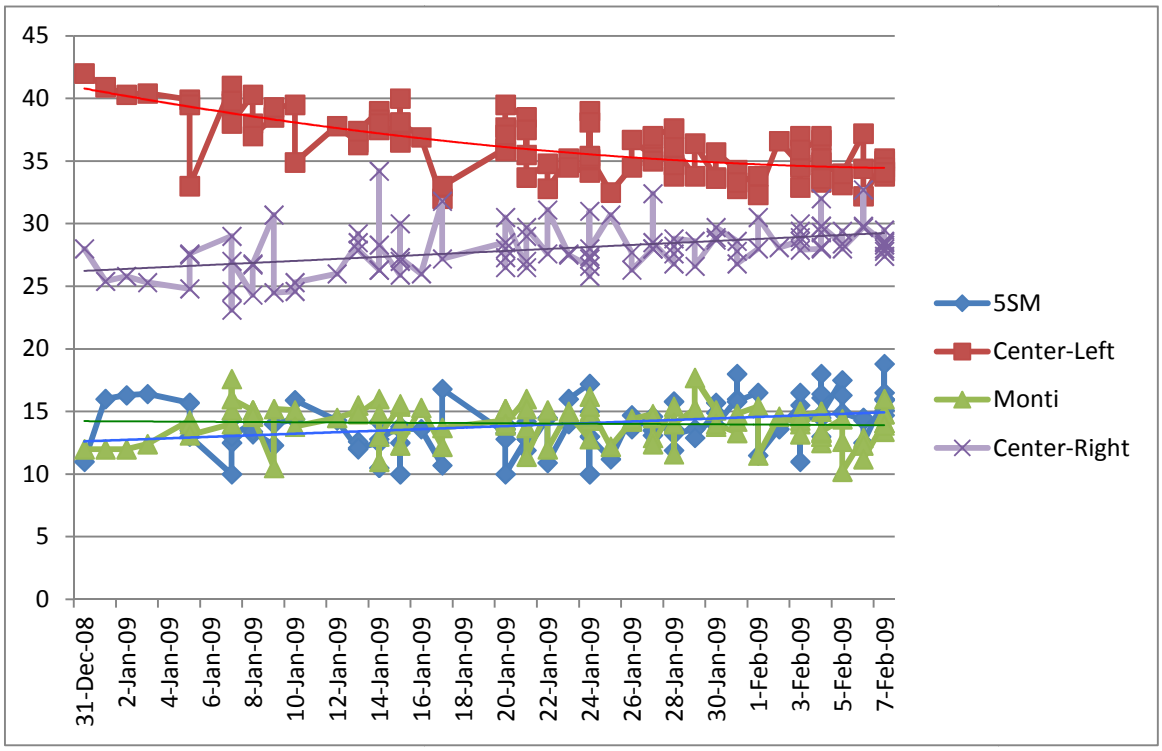

*Source*: Eurobarometer (2003-2012)

Figure 2. Confidence in government in Southern Europe




*Source*: Eurobarometer (2003-2012)

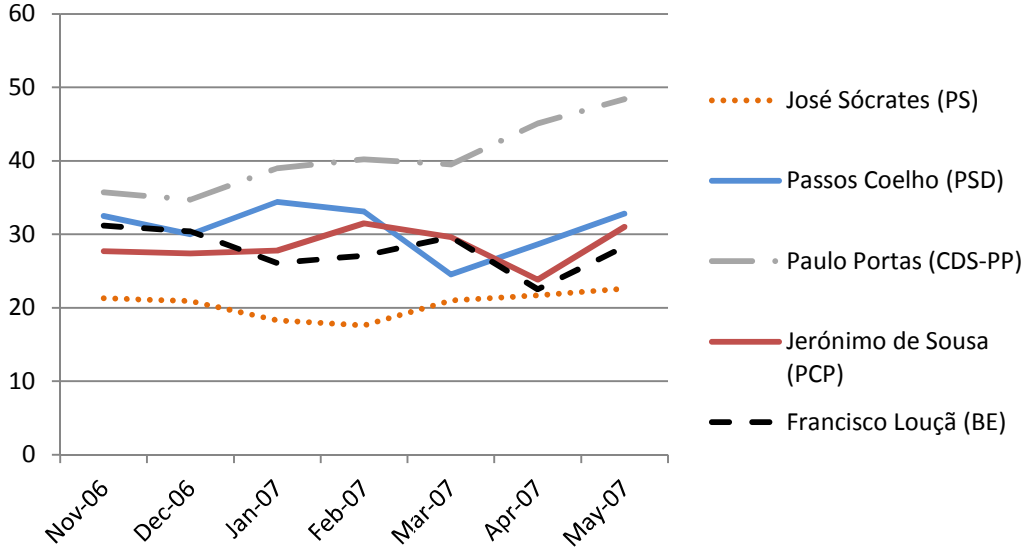
Figure 3. Vote share for the main Italian political parties according to opinion polls




*Source*: www.termometropolitico.it

*Note*: data in the Figure show the trend in party support based on opinion polls between January and February 2013.

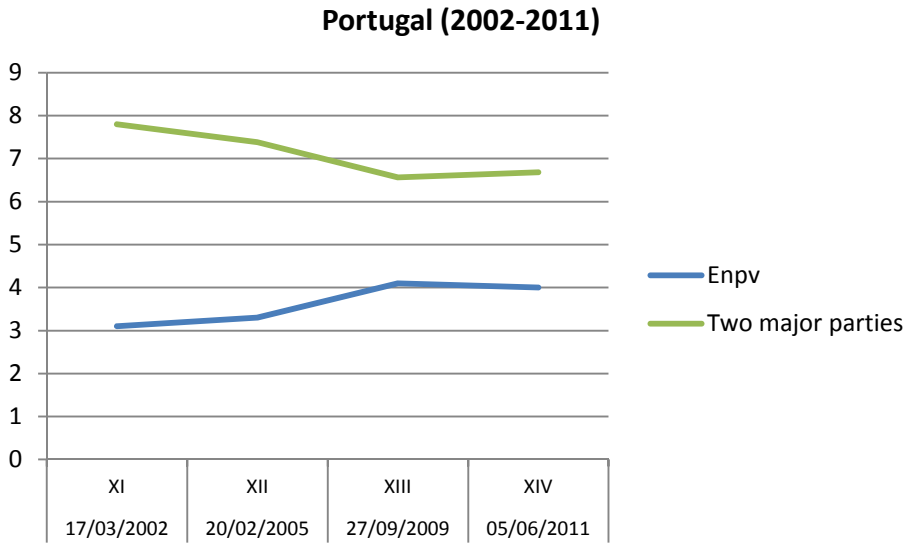
Figure 4. Leader popularity in Portugal (December 2010-June 2011)

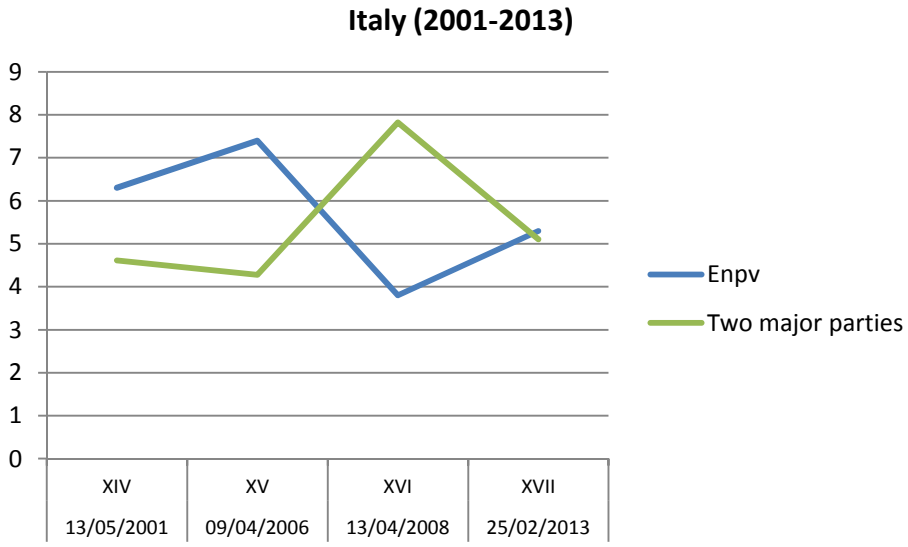



*Source*: Marktest (http://www.marktest.com/wap/a/p/m~201106/s~6/id~e9.aspx)

Note : the figure only displays positive evaluations of party leaders.

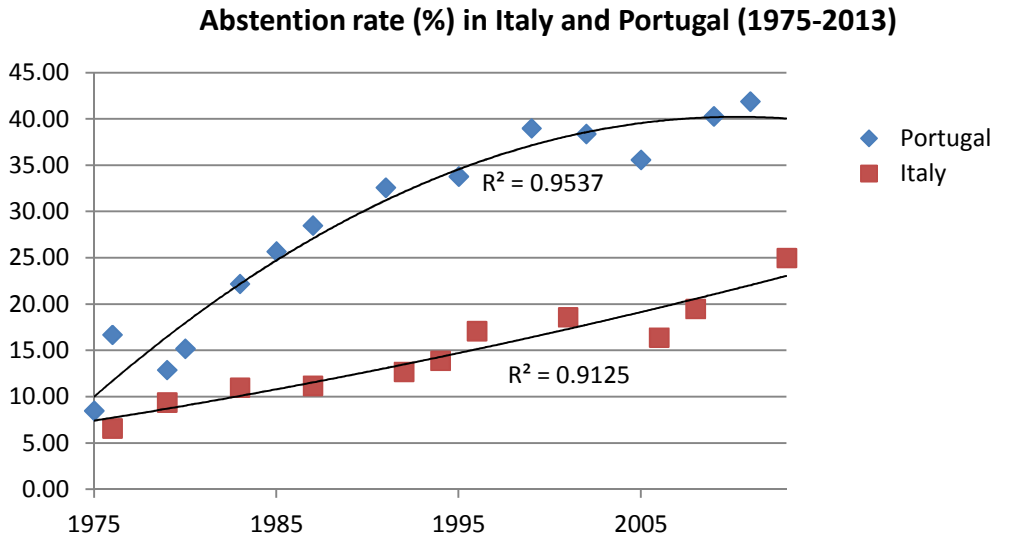
Figure 5a and 5b. Party fragmentation in Italy and Portugal

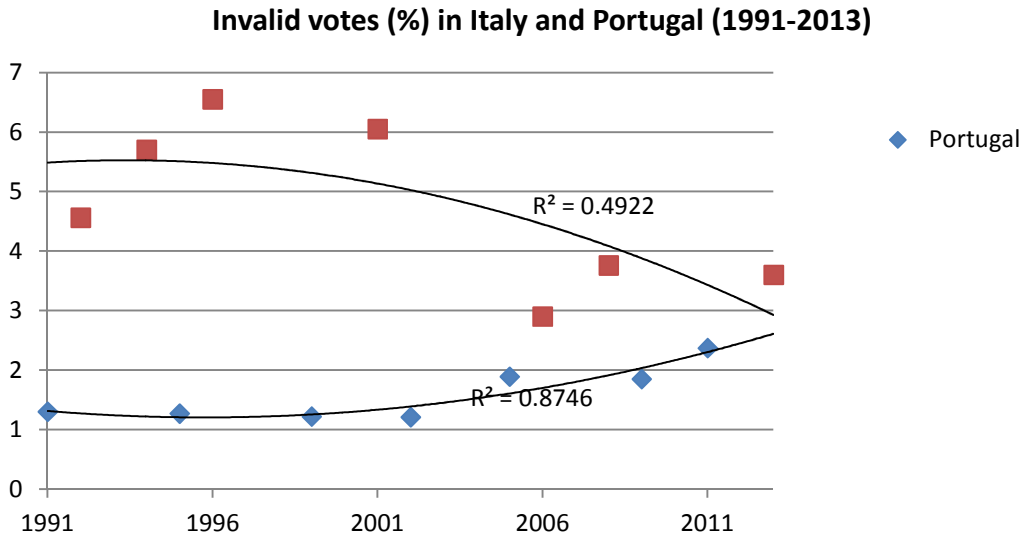



*Source*: ParlGov database. Döring, H., and Manow, P. (2012) Parliament and Government Composition Database (ParlGov): An Infrastructure for Empirical Information on Parties, Elections and Governments in Modern Democracies. Version 12/10 – 15 October 2012.

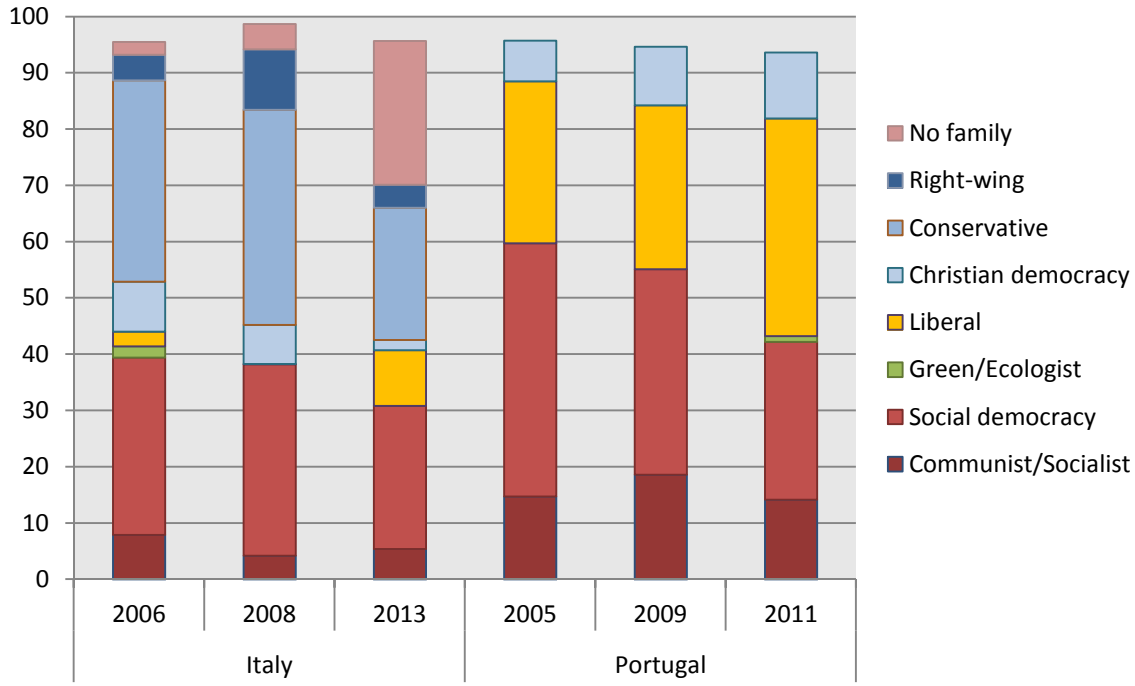
Figure 6a and 6b. Abstention rate and invalid votes in Italy and Portugal



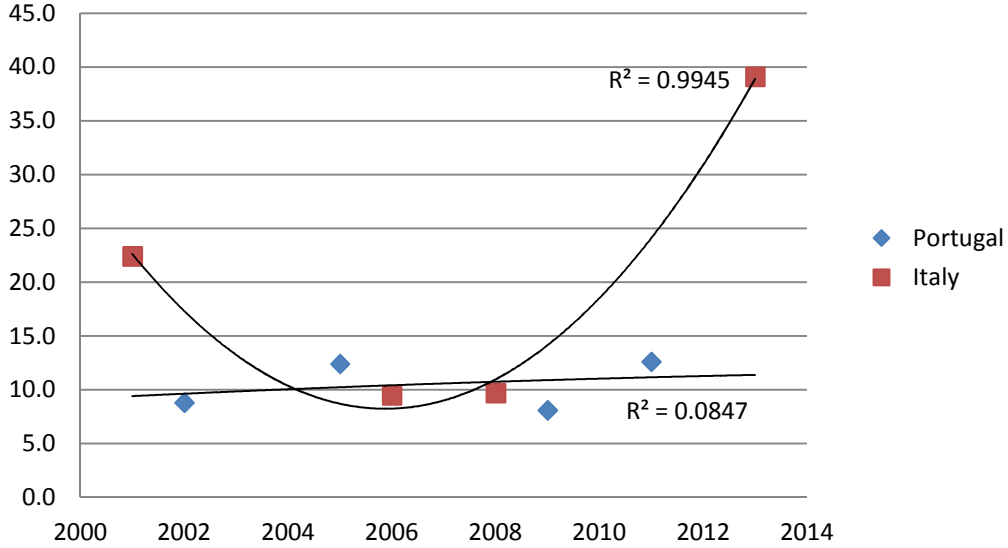

Source: ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2012)

Figure 7. Distribution of votes among political families in Italy and Portugal




Source: ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2012)

Figure 8. Electoral volatility in Portugal and Italy




Source: Portugal (own calculations), Italy. De Sio, L., Cataldi, M. and De Lucia F. (2013) Le Elezioni Politiche 2013, CISE - Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali, http://cise.luiss.it/cise/2013/05/07/le-elezioni-politiche-2013-in-e-book-il-quarto-dossier-cise/ (September 28, 2013).

## Bibliography


Bardi, L. (1996) Anti-party sentiment and party system change in Italy, *European Journal of Political Research*, 29 (3), pp.345-363.

Bellucci, P., Costa Lobo, M., Lewis-Beck, M.S. (2012) Economic crisis and elections: The European periphery, *Electoral Studies* 31, pp.469-471.

Bordignon, F. and Ceccarini L. (2013) Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics, *South European Society and Politics* DOI:10.1080/13608746.2013.775720.

Bosco, A. and Verney, S. (2012) Electoral Epidemic: The Political Cost of Economic Crisis in Southern Europe, 2010-11, *South European Society and Politics*, 17(2), pp.129-154.

Chiaramonte, A. (2007) Il Nuovo Sistema Partitico Italiano Tra Bipolarismo e Frammentazione, in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale ma non solo. Le elezioni politiche del 2006*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp.369–406.

Chiaramonte, A. (2010) Dal Bipolarismo Frammentato Al Bipolarismo Limitato? Evoluzione Del Sistema Partitico Italiano, in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale se vi pare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp.203–28.

Costa Lobo, M. and Magalhães, M. (eds.) (2009) *As Eleições Legislativas e Presidenciais, 2005-2006*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

Costa Lobo, M., Costa Pinto, A., Magalhães, P. (2012) The Political Institutions of Portuguese Democracies, in S. Royo (ed.), *Portugal in the XXI Century*, Lanham, Lexington Books, pp.23-48.

De Sio, L., Cataldi, M. and De Lucia F. (2013) Le Elezioni Politiche 2013, CISE - Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali, http://cise.luiss.it/cise/2013/05/07/le-elezioni-politiche-2013-in-e-book-il-quarto-dossier-cise/ (September 28, 2013).

Di Virgilio, A. (2010) Cambiare Strategia a Regole Invariate. La Rivoluzione Dell'offerta, in in R. D'Alimonte and A, Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale se vi pare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp.33–73.

Döring, H., and Manow, P. (2012) Parliament and Government Composition Database (ParlGov): An Infrastructure for Empirical Information on Parties, Elections and Governments in Modern Democracies. Version 12/10 – 15 October 2012.

Fernandes, J. (2011) The 2011 Portuguese Election: Looking for a Way Out, *West European politics* 34 (6), pp.1296-1303.

Freire, A. (2001) *Modelos de comportamento eleitoral*, Oeiras, Celta.

Freire, A. and Costa Lobo, M. (2005) Economics, Ideology and Vote: Southern Europe, 1985-2000, *European Journal of Political Research* 44, pp.493-518.

Freire, A. and Magalhães, P. (2002) *A Abstenção Eleitoral Em Portugal*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais Lisbon.

Freire, A. and Meirinho, M. (2012) Institutional Reform in Portugal: From the Perspective of Deputies and Voters Perspectives, *Pôle Sud*, 36(1), pp.107–125.

Freire, A. and Santana-Pereira, J. (2012) Economic Voting in Portugal, 2002–2009, *Electoral Studies* 31(3), pp.506–512.

Guedes, N. (2012) Convergência ideológica? Uma análise comparada dos programas eleitorais do PS e do PSD (1991-2009), *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 68, pp.103-125.

Istituto Cattaneo (2013) I flussi elettorali in 11 città, Press release available at: http://www.cattaneo.org/images/comunicati_stampa/Analisi%20Istituto%20Cattaneo%20-%20Elezioni%20politiche%202013%20-%20Flussi%20elettorali%20in%2011%20citt%2015.03.13.pdf (last time checked: 11/06/2013)

Laakso, M. and Taagepera R. (1979) Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe, *Comparative political studies*, 12(1), pp.3–27.

Lewis-Beck, M.S. (1988) *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
Lewis-Beck, M.S., and Nadeau R. (2012) PIGS or Not? Economic Voting in Southern Europe, *Electoral Studies* 31, pp.472–77.
Lisi, M. (2010) The Renewal of the Socialist Majority: The 2009 Portuguese Legislative Elections, *West European Politics*, 33(2), pp.381–388.
Little, C. (2011) The General Election of 2011 in the Republic of Ireland: All Changed Utterly?, *West European Politics* 34 (6), pp.1304-13.
Lobo, M. Costa and Magalhães, P. eds. (2009) *As Eleições Legislativas e Presidenciais, 2005-2006*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.
Magalhães, P. (2012) After the Bailout: Responsibility, Policy, and Valence in the Portuguese Legislative Election of June 2011, *South European Society and Politics*, 17(2), pp.309–27.
Mair, P. (2011) Bini Smaghi vs. the parties: representative government and institutional constraints, *EUI working paper no. 2011/22*, European University Institute, Florence.
Mete, V. (2010) Four types of anti-politics: Insights from the Italian case, *Modern Italy*, 15 (1), pp.37-61.
Morlino, L., and Tarchi, M. (1996) The dissatisfied society: The roots of political change in Italy, *European Journal of Political Research* 30 (1), pp.41-63.
Moury, C. and A. Freire (2013), Austerity Policies and Politics: the case of Portugal, *Pôle Sud* (forthcoming).
Norris, P. (2011) *Democratic Deficit*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Pasquino, G. (2002) Un'elezione non come le altre, in G. Pasquino (ed.), *Dall'Ulivo al governo Berlusconi*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp.11-21.
Pedersen, Mogens N. (1979) The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility, *European Journal of Political Research*, 7(1), pp.1–26.
Rose, R. and Munro N. (2009) Parties and Elections in New European Democracies, European Consortium for Political Research.
Scotto, T. J. (2012) Conclusion: Thinking about models of economic voting in hard times, *Electoral Studies* 31, 529-531.
Tuorto, D. (2011) La Partecipazione Al Voto, in P. Bellucci and P. Segatti (eds.) *Votare in Italia: 1968-2008*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp.53–79.
Van Der Brug, W., Van der Eijk, C. and Franklin M. (2007) *The Economy and the Vote*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Verzichelli, L. and Cotta, M. (2000) Italy: From 'Constrained' Coalitions to Alternating Governments?, in W.C. Müller and K. Strøm (eds.), *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.433-497.