

Party Newspapers Perspectives and Choices: A Comparative Content Analysis View

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Abstract

The focus of this article is on how different parties use its party newspapers as instruments of political communication, in the current political context, particularly in Portuguese press. As is to be expected, the newspapers reproduce the party's vision and help disseminate their leaders' political ideals and proposals. There are, however, significant differences in the history and format of each publication, in terms of the way the political message is put across and the scope of the subjects addressed. This article is based on a content analysis technique, through a categorical qualitative and quantitative systematization. The expected results are centered on the discussion about the communication strategies of ideologically different party newspapers which are visible in front pages. Moreover, this study is expected to contribute to the discussion about personalization in politics, focusing and considering in particular party newspapers. This is a subject that has been scarcely investigated in communication studies and in political science, despite the presence and ideological place of party newspapers in the past and at present. The aim of this article is to make a contribution toward demonstrating and boosting the interest of this important support to party life and politics.

Keywords

party newspapers, political parties, party communication

Introductory Note

The party press is a specific field that has been restructured and adapted to the times of contemporary politics and life in society, with new priorities and consumptions when it comes to communication. The emergence and solidification of the political parties, generally, and in Portugal in particular, was accompanied by a need to structure their internal communication to ensure an effective relationship between the power elites, local structures, and party supporters. Party press still is a privileged vehicle in transmitting political and party messages, publicizing party activities, and playing a role in defending political ideologies.

The history of party newspapers in Portugal springs from a vast amount of information attesting to the need to look through the different issues to obtain a true picture of the political and party reality and Portuguese civil society. They are, in fact, essential instruments in understanding the parties' history and identity. Furthermore, newspapers have been adapting to new information technology (regularly using the Internet and social networks), and asserting themselves as the central organs of their parties, that is, the institutional connection, is clear throughout the study.

This article endeavors to answer to a pressing need for scientific research into the party press, which converges

with the fields of communication and political sciences. The research goals are to develop the state of the art on the subject, which has been analyzed very little; to select and explore a number of party newspapers; and to develop a content analysis model allowing future developments from an international comparative perspective. The expected results are a contribution to the study of party newspapers, considering a reinforcement of the revision of the state of the art and achievement of new and intriguing results, in terms of trends in political communication in studies of this type of newspaper. The core question in this research is as follows: How party newspapers, that strongly differ ideologically, make use of their official newspapers, in a front-page messages' perspective, to survive?

This article sets off from a base and historical framework to analyze the content of the political message, in the party

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Table 1. Phases of Political Communication.

1	2	3
Stable political institutions	More stable electorates	Greater political professionalization
Strong ideologies	Professionalization of communication	Political competition
	Adaptation to new values	Anti-elite populism
	Appearance of television	Diversification of contents
		Changes in perception of the message

Source. Adapted from J. G. Blumler and D. Kavanagh (1999).

press from January 2010 to June 2012. This time span was extended to 2½ years due to a criteria based on redundancy found in the data collected. In methodological terms, this research applies the content analysis technique to the central front-page image, words, and expressions used which constitutes a central axis of the research made.

Political and Party Communication

The impact of the media on contemporary societies has been studied by a number of theorists, including their social and psychological effects and the economic and political changes that have occurred (Botan, 2010). However, we are looking for a different perspective here. When we address the party press phenomenon, it is important to note that political communication is the center of analysis, in terms of the politics and ideology in each publication's goals and purposes. Political communication, therefore, includes all the political agents and verbal and written rhetoric, such as all signs and body language that can be taken from the party debate (McNair, 1999).

Generally speaking, we can say that political communication addresses the discourse and political message of all agents wishing to win over public opinion (voters), regardless of the subject or electoral cycle. Their goals are the same, although it is possible to identify three main phases in political communication (see Table 1).

This structure is designed to distinguish the initial party press that appeared in the early 20th century and was owned by businessmen (the current large business groups) or political parties from the press that came next, based on the principles of independence and objectivity (Schultz, 2007). The mass parties, especially in the United States, played an important role as generators and boosters of mass circulation of party newspapers (Kaplan, 2006). The journalistic criteria and editorial choices of the generic press are, naturally, different from those of the party press. The two fundamental concepts in play here are information and propaganda. Party newspapers work to combine a purpose of information, based in the factual presentation of events that spark the

public's interest and the aim of propaganda, which is to convey the party's official position and defend its ideology.

As we have mentioned, the newspaper is the party's central organ, which entails duties of institutional loyalty. As Kaplan posits (2006), the newspaper would first be obliged to support the party leaders and their measures, and try to avoid any kind of discussion about them. Unity around the leader would be accompanied by exaltation of the party's values and ideals. The newspaper's editorials would toe the party line.

The editorial commitment conditioned the selection of contents and the political message to be put over. The emergence of the principles of impartiality and journalistic objectivity wrought a change in the patterns of the party press, which was more segmented and turned inward into the party. This, plus a more literate and informed public, led to a substantial change in the newspapers' perspective and coverage of political and party events. The high impact of the party press in the Anglo-Saxon countries, mainly since the early 20th century, would influence editorial options over the years. Party leanings in the press are very present in journalistic coverage and reporting on election campaigns. The question here is defining the goals of political and party communication and the role that the party newspapers play as vehicles for the message of the party or its key agents. In fact, the general press was regarded as a traditional vehicle for political messages, hence its regular use in American politics. There are two main goals: information and institutional propaganda. Golden and Golden (1993) stress widely the importance of the Founding Father Thomas Jefferson accurate and modern vision, in the late 18th century, about the role of press to sustain democracy. This singular vision becomes, though, central to understand politics, media, and democracy interconnections. The role of partisan press to persuade public is present and permanent (Sheppard, 2007). While information is found in the entire press and features in the Journalists' Code of Conduct, it is also visible as the media are a central element of the public space once occupied by the school, church, or clubs in the attempt to form public opinion (Habermas, 1962). Propaganda involves a more politicized approach and is in line with the definition of the party press's goals, analyzed as the organization's supporter. In other words, party press is used as a political communication technique to win power and publicize party leaders and their policies. Institutional and organizational theories (Norris, 2002) place the influence of political parties and the rules of the political game in the context of party newspapers. Moreover, the "dramatization of press" has its place as a fundamental instrument of propaganda, particularly in revolutionary and post-revolutionary moments (Sousa, 2001, 2003), such as those that occurred in Portugal, just after the 1974 revolution. The new institutionalism shows that the concept of an institution has introduced aspects of power in the analysis of journalism and refutes merely technical visions (Kaplan, 2006).

The need for a brief historical revision of the party press and the foundation of the three publications analyzed here is

Image 1. Feb. 1931



Image 2. Aug. 1940



Image 3. Jan. 1950



Image 4. Jan. 1960



Image 5. 10.Jan. 1970



Image 6. Jan. 1935



Image 7. Jan. 1945



Image 8. Jan. 1955



Image 9. Jan. 1965



Image 10. April 1974



Numbers of *Avante* by Decade: 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970.

Source: <http://www.avante.pt/>

the starting point and a basis for a content analysis of the party press's message, in Portugal. Based on this premise, it is not our intention to conduct an exhaustive review of the history of the party and political and party press. What is important is to portray the political context in which *Avante*, *Acção Socialista*, and *Povo Livre* emerged. The considered historical and revolutionary period (after 1974) witnessed the appearance of countless party political newspapers, such as *Poder Popular* from the MES¹; *Luta Popular* (1971) from the MRPP²; *Diário* with strong communist leanings; *Tempo*, *Diabo*, *Sol*, and *Dia* right-wing oriented newspapers, though with no direct connections to any party. With the exceptions of *Luta Popular* and *Diabo*, none of these newspapers already exists, and in these two cases, its circulation is low and occasional.

Brief History and Corpus of the Selected Newspapers

The advent of free elections after 1975, subsequent to the 1974 revolution, in Portugal, obliged the parties to find ways of extending their support base and having regular contact

with their party members and sympathizers. The role of party newspapers fulfills this goal.

Avante was not the first official Communist Party newspaper. *O Comunista* was founded in 1921 and *Proletário* in 1929. Due to the political and institutional difficulties of communist party, that opposed the *Estado Novo* regime,³ and the limitations on the circulation of the newspapers, both, *O Comunista* and *Proletário*, disappeared. The clandestine nature of *Avante*, between 1931 and 1974, accentuated its defiant perspective. It was printed by countless clandestine print shops and was published weekly, or fortnightly from the 1940s onward, under the influence of Álvaro Cunhal, the historical leader of the Portuguese Communist Party, during the 20th century. *Avante* website show that the newspaper reached print runs of more than 10,000 copies, in this period (<http://www.avante.pt/>).

The constant repression and lack of technical resources explain the simplicity of the publications at the time when the emphasis was on transmitting its political message. The papers had two to six pages (easy and quick to read), with strong appeals for resistance and news on party activities at

home and in a number of international proletariat organizations.

The *Avante* images enabled us to look back at the first issues of *Avante* in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and intermediate publishing in each decade. The edition chosen in 1974 was prior to the 1974 April revolution and, though, was produced in the party underground period. A common pattern was a lot of information crammed into a small space and constant use of slogans, and the feeling of unity against repression. In this phase, it was very difficult to distinguish the front page from the content of the newspaper and the idea was to convey as much information as possible in the small space available. The difficulties and production costs were decisive factors in the choice of the newspaper's format and, during the dictatorship printing methods, were fairly primitive. The format and size of the newspaper might vary from one edition to the next, depending on existing technical and financial conditions.

The focus of *Avante*'s content was the resistance to the Salazar regime (and later—1968-1974, to the Marcello Caetano regime) and the defense of proletariat values. The fierce opposition made by the communist party to *Estado Novo* regime, led by Salazar, was supported in its primordial revolutionary ideology, culture, and attitude, in a deep republican tradition that, during and after the I Republic period (1910-1926), brought up the importance of defending the ideals of stronger and equalitarian society and State. These ideals were clear and universal, such as the liberty, human dignity, justice, and education (Rosas & Brito, 1996). In view of the political context, at the time, and the defense of its primary values, any of the communist party's newspapers made constant use of slogans rallying people to the struggle or resistance, showing the unity and capacity for association of the different sections of the party. It constantly used words like "struggle," "resistance," and "freedom," and imperative expressions to call the workers to action.

Of the three newspapers, only *Avante* dates back to before the April revolution (April 25, 1974) and was consistently published clandestinely. *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* appeared after the April 25, 1974, revolution, and were the cornerstone of the Social Democratic Party and Socialist Party, for publicizing their ideas and plans during electoral campaigns. Although the first edition of *Acção Socialista* came out in 1978 (see Table 2), it succeeded *Portugal Socialista*, published clandestinely in 1967. Despite this short period, in the case of *Acção Socialista*, these two partisan newspapers, *Acção Socialista* and *Povo Livre*, have typically a different historical political support and diverse social and media contexts when comparing with *Avante*'s background. Both are product of two catch-all parties (the left-wing socialist party and the center-right wing social democratic party) that have an institutionalized political and ideological life, in opposition to the communist party and *Avante*, an historically massive, revolutionary, and survivor party. In this sense, the context, the nature of power, and the

nature of its organizations do make a difference in terms of words appropriation by participants, and particularly by the political parties rhetoric (van Dijk, 1997). The role of media has fundamentally critic consequences, by helping to promote wider and better information, knowledge, and opinion reflection, though it is not responsible to contribute directly to a "greater public cynicism" (Norris, 2000, p. 3). On the contrary, the "civic malaise" has deeper social and political roots which cannot be directly attributed to mass media and to democratic systems' message processes of construction. The better democratic standards achieved in media systems are supported in a permanent audit to "the performance of the news media system in any democracy" (Norris, 2000, p. 22).

Regarding Table 2, it is important to mention three central characteristics: frequency, distribution format, and price of the newspapers. Regarding frequency, *Avante* was the newspaper with the most issues (130) in the period analyzed, followed by *Povo Livre* (119). They are both weekly publications, the difference being that *Povo Livre* was not published in August 2010 or 2011. Interestingly, *Avante* is the only newspaper of the three that has its own website, separate from that of the party. After a period of weekly issues, *Acção Socialista* is, from 2011, monthly distributed. This distinction in terms of frequency automatically meant that the first two publications always had to have more constantly updated information, while a monthly newspaper contains summarized versions of the news from the period.

Where distribution was concerned, an aspect directly related to access to information is that the three publications are available in full text online. However, *Avante* also sells its issues in paper form, while *Acção Socialista* is sent to all socialist militants with their membership fees paid up. *Povo Livre* is currently published in an online version and is emailed to all registered party members. This has direct effects on access to the publications, although dual distribution (paper and online) reaches more readers and the target audience in particular.

Another factor directly related to access to these publications is its price. *Avante* is the unique newspaper that is meant to be sold. *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* are free, although the latter is only sent to paid-up militants. These newspapers have no income from advertising and are funded from each party's internal budget. In view of the durability of the publications, their periodic nature, and increased channels of distribution, the party press continues to be an excellent institutional propaganda instrument and channel for internal party communication.

Structure of the Newspapers

There is a direct relation between the editorial choices of areas and the subjects highlighted in each newspaper. It is important, though, to describe the current structure of the three newspapers (please see Table 3).

Table 2. The Party Press in Portugal.

Newspaper	Party	Founded	Frequency	Editions	Distribution	Price
<i>Avante</i>	PCP	February 15, 1931	Weekly	130	Paper/online	€1.20
<i>Povo Livre</i>	PSD	August 13, 1974	Weekly	119	Online	Free
<i>Acção Socialista</i>	PS	September 30, 1978	Monthly	29	Paper/online	Free

Source. <http://www.avante.pt/>; <http://www.psd.pt/>; <http://www.ps.pt/>

Table 3. Subjects Analyzed in the Party Press.

	Party life	Parliament	News	Local power	European matters	International news	Opinion pieces	Culture	Interviews
<i>Avante</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>Povo Livre</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X		
<i>Acção Socialista</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Source. <http://www.avante.pt/>; <http://www.psd.pt/>; <http://www.ps.pt/>

This codification (see Table 3) shows the structure of the three newspapers, in which the subjects addressed do not differ significantly. The difference lies in the emphasis given to each. The first item, party life, is reflected in reports on the activities of local structures and sections and party figures. They also focus on leaders and other influential members and the work of party councilors in local authorities. All the publications also highlight the activity of their parliamentary groups and legislative initiatives. This aspect is essential as a bridge between civil society and its political representatives to create proximity. While *Avante* focuses on the parliamentary group's collective position, *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* focus on speeches by their party MPs. Where news is concerned, the party newspapers keep up with current political (in the broad sense) and economic news.

Where European politics are concerned, *Povo Livre* highlights the work of its MEPs, while *Acção Socialista* has a supplement published by the European Socialist Parliamentary Group that focuses on the work of its MEPs and describes initiatives undertaken in the EU. *Avante*'s attention to European matters is similar to that of a traditional newspaper, that is, the news covers all areas of European politics (economy, policy, culture, environment, technology, etc.).

There is a considerable difference in the treatment of information between *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* compared with *Avante*, in terms of international politics. The news coverage by first two (*Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista*) follows a national alignment, that is, always in connection with their party leaders or the government's position, while *Avante* has a specific section about the international workers' struggle and diplomatic relations.

The three newspapers have opinion sections, in which the subjects are chosen freely, just like the cultural sections in *Acção Socialista* and *Avante*, with recommendations of books, plays, exhibitions, and so on. Interviews are a central

feature of *Acção Socialista*, but are not used regularly by the other two. This may be directly related to the newspaper's structure and its actual capacity to broaden the areas of analysis and engage in more far-reaching journalism.

There are three aspects to be borne in mind when analyzing the newspapers in the period in question (January 2010–June 2012): the change in Portuguese government, in June 2011 (the socialists—PS, headed by José Sócrates, the former Prime Minister, from 2005 to 2011—were defeated by the social democrats—PSD, led by Pedro Passos Coelho); the *troika* (European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Commission) economic adjustment program, in Portugal (from April 2011 to May 2015); and the change in the newspapers editors of *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista*. The first event automatically changed the protagonists of these two party newspapers news, which represent the Portuguese government arch (PS and PSD⁴). The *troika*'s intervention resulted essentially in a newspaper's focus on the *troika*'s measures taken. The change of editors at the newspapers did not affect significantly the editorial line and design.

Method

This research was made in a preliminary basis, attending to a main goal of allowing a deeper basis of discussion in the specific field considered, the partisan newspapers. One main purpose is allowing evidence on this subject so as to reinforce a future construction of hypothesis and new insights of analysis. Attending to the essayistic nature of this study and the rather scarce specific research on the central object considered, this research was developed as an exploratory research study. Considering this, one of the strongest outputs aimed for is the opening of perspectives for the concretization of hypotheses in future researches.

Three publications—*Avante*, *Povo Livre*, and *Acção Socialista*—were selected, as they were the three main party

newspapers, due to their frequency and continuity. *Avante* demonstrates resistance and the historical perspective, while the eminence of *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* lies in the swings in governments in accordance with electoral cycles.⁵

The data collection was conducted from January 2010 to June 2012, as referred. The period from January 2010 to June 2012 involved a considerable number of issues for analysis, due to their frequency. During this period, there were changes in party leadership with the election of Pedro Passos Coelho in the PSD, and António José Seguro as leader in the PS. The period chosen enabled us to ascertain whether, in a left–right change of government, there were changes in the newspapers' contents or in the subjects addressed.⁶

Two techniques were used in this research. The principal was content analysis; the secondary was the interview technique. This later was based on an informal and in-depth basis, and was applied to chief editors and journalists of the three newspapers. Information and data collected, through the interview technique, were solely used to help us in the interpretation of the results achieved through the application of the content analysis technique. Content analysis was applied to identify the main communication trends and the goals of the publications and the contents analyzed.

In methodological terms, content analysis was used from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, always on a categorical basis, including only online editions available on the party websites. The selected contents were divided into categories that were constructed as we endeavored to pinpoint the expressed and implicit sense of the intention in the messages. The qualitative analysis was followed by an inferential reading of the results (Krippendorff, 2004), organizing the contents into categories using a process of inference and interpretation that went beyond the intentions of the communication itself. The use of content analysis entails a series of choices and depends on the analysis goals. The measures of objectivity selected were based in a miles codification process (Bardin, 2003). The categories were validated to ensure that they met certain conditions, such as, according to Bardin (2003),

- homogeneity (or being of an identical nature),
- exhaustiveness (or contain all the key ideas or dimensions to the hypotheses or objectives referred),
- exclusivity (or not to repeat or overlap the categories for the objectives defined),
- objectivity (or, regardless of the researcher, the results must be the same), and
- adequacy or pertinence (or the appropriateness to the objectives, assumptions, or contents analyzed).

These criteria were followed in each category process of construction, aiming to obtain a final basis of analysis, in valid terms, and ensuring the needed fidelity of results, on one hand. On the other, these criteria were applied considering the subjects and structure of each of the three partisan

newspapers analyzed (see Table 3). The categories used were derived, primarily, from the range of issues selected in front pages, namely, facts and personalities referred, as well as the subjects addressed. The subjects addressed allowed the construction of a set of categories that differed in each newspaper editorial policy and organization. However, there was a central set of categories that were systematically enunciated for all the newspapers analyzed: “political rhetoric,” “workers' struggle,” “strikes,” and “values of April/May.” The “political rhetoric category” included all the news that referred specific and clear references defending the ideals of each partisan newspaper. The categorization process was followed by an in-depth stage of analysis, whenever possible, based on the use of specific images and slogans as political communication instruments. The principal added value of this research is due and found on the conjugation of results derived from the content analysis application to each newspaper, combined with the in-depth analysis made, in a comparative perspective. In this study, the aim of content analysis in the systematization and interpretation of headlines and pictures used on the front pages of party newspapers is to organize communication trends and make inferences on the importance of political symbols as a factor in espousal of a certain idea.

Front Pages: Facts and Personalities

The newspaper's front page is quite functional in terms of attracting buyers and readers, the main news covered, and the dichotomy between positive and negative discourse. A newspaper's front-page presentation can be decisive to sales or simply catching its target audience's attention. Newspapers, therefore, systematically use strong images and words, in front page. In party newspapers, the force of the written word, in the form of slogans and watchwords, is on the front page mainly. The idea is, obviously, to attract readers' auditory and visual memory, and this is one of the ways used most to convey the content of the message.

In the period in question (January 2010–June 2012), Ferreira Leite (PSD's leader from 2008 to 2010) was on the front page in almost every issue analyzed (nine of the 10 issues analyzed, during the selected period). Pedro Passos Coelho, the PSD new leader (elected in 2010) and Prime Minister (2011–2015), appeared on the front page of *Povo Livre* 85 times (in 119 issues). We may infer that it is not relevant whether the party is in power or opposition, as there is considerable focus on the leader as its central figure, in both periods. A strong presence of the party leader in front pages means to ensure his or her assertion with the party members, and also to show the electorate, in general, an image of unity and consistency, in terms of discourse and political course. This tendency stresses the phenomenon of the personification of politics.

There are important aspects to take into account in Figure 1, below. There are only tenuous references to the party's history (facts or personalities),⁷ and other national and

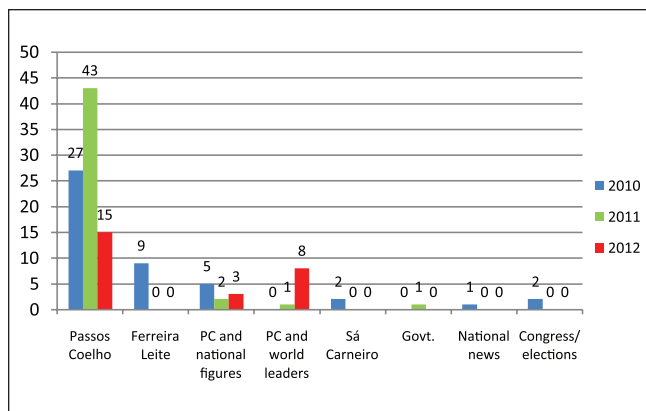


Figure 1. Front pages of *Povo Livre*: Facts and personalities—2010, 2011, 2012.

international figures appear with the leader. In 2012, there were eight issues in which Pedro Passos Coelho is shown on the front page with world leaders, which may be directly related to the Financial Adjustment Programme in effect in Portugal. Party life (internal elections and Congresses) occupy the front page in two issues, while the floods in Madeira⁸ (2010) made the headlines in one issue of *Povo Livre*. Indeed, this was the only non-political event to feature on front pages of *Povo Livre* in the period. In view of the period in question and the fact that there were two elections (presidential and parliamentary, in 2011), we would expect greater coverage of these events. The presidential candidate officially supported by the PSD (Aníbal Cavaco Silva) does not appear on any front page of the newspaper, however, and the presidential and parliamentary elections were referred to on the basis of the party leader (Passos Coelho).

The predominance of the leader emphasizes the internal nature of the newspaper, designed to inform party members and sympathizers of what the president and party structures were doing. Is this the model of a party newspaper? Or should the party press reflect part of the ordinary press and address more general subjects? The choice of the leader for the front page in around 82% of the issues in the period does not prevent this from happening, and so it is therefore necessary to fit the leader into the subjects addressed in each issue. In many issues, Passos Coelho was chosen for the front page, but the subject of the issue was not directly related to him.

The front pages of *Acção Socialista* vary considerably, which is even more relevant due to the fact that it has fewer issues than the other newspapers (see Figure 2). There was also a substantial change in editorial front-page choices in 2010 against the other years. In 2010, there were regular interviews with government members (ministers and secretaries of state). The main priority will have been assertion of state power and publicization of government choices, which was the focus of 10 of the 14 issues that year. Nine different personalities were interviewed in the 10 issues, and only José Sócrates featured twice on the front page.

The other issues headlined the *Stability and Growth Plan* (Plano de Estabilidade e Crescimento [PEC]), revision of the Constitution, the national meeting of socialist women, and Manuel Alegre's candidacy in the 2011 presidential elections. They covered central news, such as the economy and the necessary agreement between the parties in the power spectrum for the constitutional revision. Alternation of front-page figures also reflects a great variety of subject matters, with a more specific position in each problem. After António José Seguro took over as leader of the PS (2011-2014), the newspaper's editors changed, and the party lost the 2011 parliamentary elections, there was a clear change in the front pages of subsequent issues. The PS leader features in four of the 10 issues in 2011 and three of the five in 2012. This may be due to the need to assert him as leader both within (after the elections) and outside the party. The strong image of José Sócrates's leadership and the majorities achieved in the last elections led to a need to strengthen the leadership. The year 2011 witnessed elections in PS, and three issues focused on them. The other issues concentrated on the state budget, Manuel Alegre's candidacy, and the PS's historic leader Mário Soares.⁹

In June 2012, *Acção Socialista* edition, there was a large interview with Maria de Belém Roseira (see Image 26), President of the Socialist Party, and a front page devoted to Braga, European Youth Capital, and Guimarães, European Capital of Culture, in 2012. This shows a clear difference about the personalization strategy in *Povo Livre* newspaper (see Figure 1). Although it regularly featured party personalities, there were rarely repetitions, and the editors endeavored to include as many people and subjects as possible. The choices for front page are more in line with a general newspaper, avoiding repetitions, although the fact that the newspaper is monthly which means more time to prepare it.

When analyzing the front pages of *Avante*, it is important to distinguish between the years, due to a great variety of images and subjects used (see Figure 3). Although pictures of demonstrations (protests, marches, trade union demonstrations) occupied 31 of the 53 issues, traditional or key party images are used to report on initiatives or official political positions of the communist party.

In what *Acção Socialista* concerns (see Images 22-28), the front-page images are systematically of party personalities, with no overuse of the leader. There are interviews on different subjects and a lot of information on the front page, in terms of the number and size of the pieces. The newspaper's structure allows for the inclusion of non-political areas, such as literature, cinema, science, and culture.

In *Avante*, three issues used slogans stressing the need "to fight for a better life" and "combat price rises and theft of wages," and the announcement of the general strike on November 24, 2010, featured in several issues (see examples in Images 31 and 32). The images used had a wide scope, ranging from the communist party leader in charge, Jerónimo de Sousa, to party activities (trade union plenary, regional

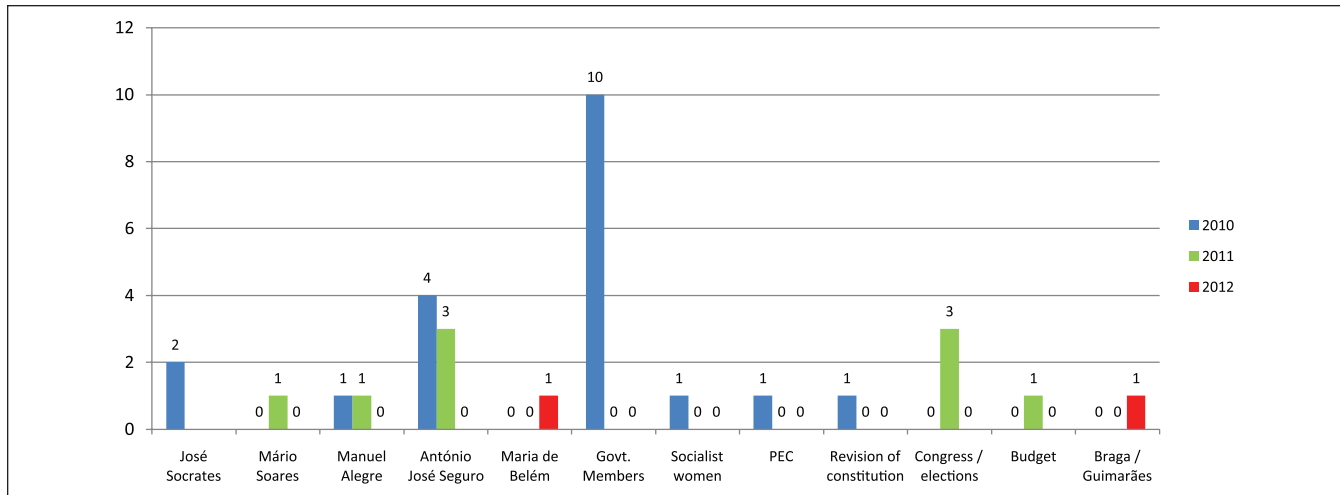


Figure 2. Front pages of *Acção Socialista*: Facts and personalities—2010, 2011, 2012.

Image 14. 20/01/2010 Image 15. 10/11/2010 Image 16. 15/06/2011 Image 17. 05/10/2011



Image 18. 07/03/2012 Image 19. 28/03/2012 Image 20. 25/04/2012 Image 21. 23/05/2012



Image 22. 11/03/2010



Image 23. 30/04/2010



Image 27. 28/06/2010



Image 24. 06/2011



Image 25. July 2011



Image 26. 06/2012



Image 27. 01/2012



Image 28. 03.2012



Acção Socialista 2010-2012.

Source: http://www.psp.pt/imagens/arquivo_accasocialista/

Note. There is a change in figure design of *Acção Socialista* from 2010: The newspaper's name is AS, not written in full.

assemblies, and youth meetings). The personification of the front page is uncommon. Joint force prevails over any individual leader. The year 2011 witnessed more varied editorial choices for the front pages of *Avante*. In 27 issues, demonstrations and street protests took the fore (though in a smaller number than in 2010). We found a distribution in accordance with the subjects covered, which paints a portrait of the social reality and the PCP's concerns.

Therefore, in addition to references to party figures (Francisco Lopes, presidential candidate, and Jerónimo de Sousa, the communist leader currently in charge, with one issue each) and party life (rallies, *Avante* Festival, and the PCP flag), images and portraits of civil society are also featured. Two issues display “hands,” which is most likely a direct reference to the importance of work. The portrayal of

elderly people reflects concerns about their standard of living, affecting a good part of its electorate. Men in black represent foreign intervention and its effects on the country's economy. The two issues with a map of Portugal constitute an appeal to the left wing's patriotic feelings.

The carnation is also used as depicting the values of the April revolution. The debt collector personifies the (International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the picture of a woman reading a PCP leaflet indicates the party's image as a provider of information and communication. In other words, in *Avante*, we find very different scenarios from *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista*, where the front pages almost always feature party leaders.

About 65% of the 26 issues published up to the end of June 2012 described demonstrations publicized or organized by the PCP. Once again, pictures of anonymous citizens were

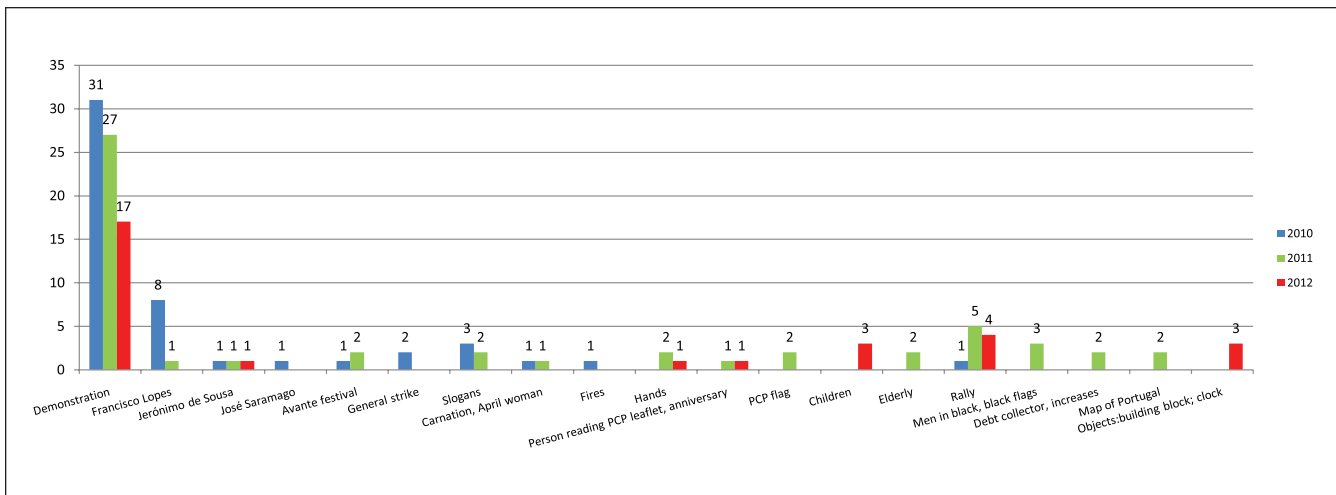


Figure 3. Front pages of *Avante*: Facts and personalities—2010, 2011, 2012.

used to reflect the party's political positions. Concerns for the future may also explain images of children in several issues, and front pages are also used to depict work (hands and construction) in defense of Portuguese businesses and working conditions. Finally, the front page of one of the issues was devoted to the Secretary-General with a clock, representing the party's work days and the commemoration of the PCP's 91st anniversary (which was created in 1921).

Front Pages: Subjects Addressed

This section analysis looks at the subjects chosen for the party newspapers' front pages and their relevance in terms of the images used and each paper's structure. Personalization in politics has been a debated issue in political science, bringing up the importance of elite party phenomena and its implications in the inner capacity of parties to generate wider and shared political visions. The political strategy of working to gain voter's confidence, through a strong image and speech orientation, made a difference on traditional perspectives about parties' role in democratic systems, as shown by Wattenberg (1995), on his U.S. Presidential elections analysis between 1952 and 1988. Evidence based on studies that evaluate the implications of personalization in politics tend to condemn this phenomenon, although, according to Adam and Maier (2010), these studies reflect, mainly, a trivial logic and a maximalist vision about democracy. A better definition about objects and explanatory factors, together with diversified explanations on how politics tend to be more people based, instead being parties or ideologies supported, opened different perspectives about how personalized political communication strategies were made effective in democracy. Maritheresa Frain (1997) brought up the importance of a traditional "personalism" concept in PSD (social democratic party) and of a strong internal competition between its several elite groups, identified with charismatic or strong leaders. A

high degree of personalization can be observed on the front pages of *Povo Livre* results in use of generic subjects classed as "political rhetoric." "We have been given the historic task of saving Portugal" or "For a better life, many things have to change" are examples of the political discourse published in the paper. In other words, they systematically reflect political opinions or positions on countless questions ranging from the economic to the social situation and save a place for political debate between the main parties. Figure 4, below, shows this position and party life and elections condition the subject chosen. In the party election year (2010), the campaign and its Congresses were the focus of seven *Povo Livre* issues, while the presidential elections and the PSD's support of Cavaco Silva¹⁰ dominated two of the issues analyzed. References to Cavaco Silva were always based on Passos Coelho, that is, his support of Cavaco Silva's candidacy for president. Passos Coelho featured on the front page of the two issues.

In 2011, there was a slight rise in front pages featuring political rhetoric (34), while the presidential and parliamentary elections dominated six issues. Similar attention went to international summits (European and United Nations) and one issue was devoted to Sá Carneiro, one of the PSD founders. The June 22, 2011, issue presented the government team and was classified under "other subjects." As in 2010, the elections resulted in a change in editorial criteria and focus on the international summits followed the Financial Adjustment Programme in the country.

In 2012, with Portugal in the center of a financial crisis, there was a greater variety in the subjects on the front pages of *Povo Livre*. Thirteen issues reflected political discourse and seven focused considerably on international and European matters and meetings. In 2012, the front pages regularly featured the leader with other international political figures (see Figure 4). In other words, after internal leadership had been stabilized, it was important to reinforce Portugal's position abroad, putting over an image of



Avante 2010-2012.
Source. <http://www.avante.pt/>

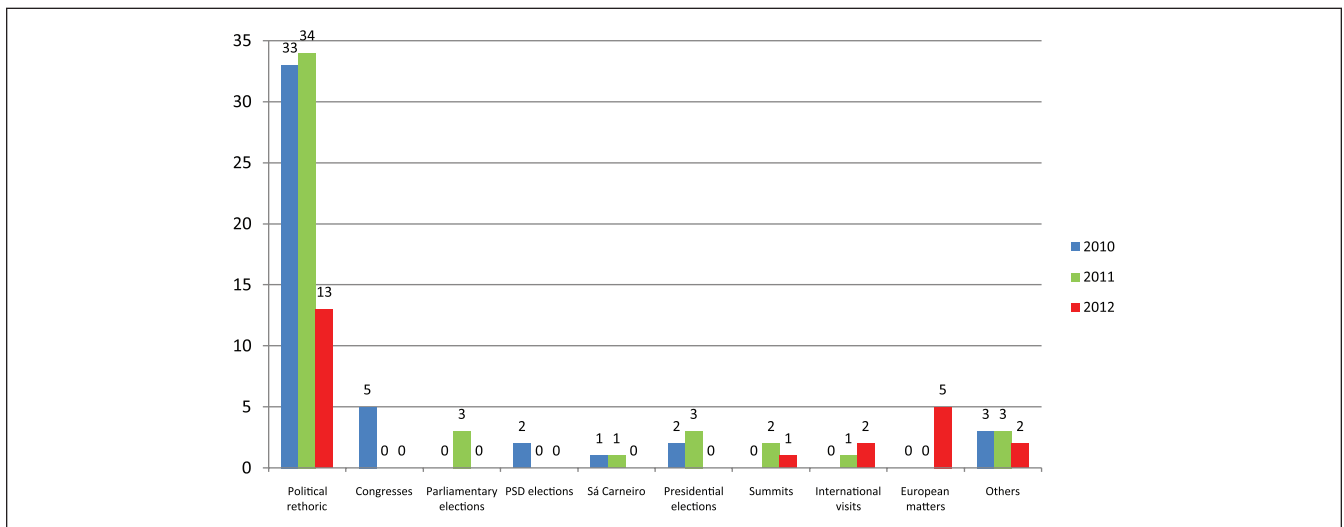


Figure 4. Front-page news of Povo Livre: Subjects addressed—2010, 2011, 2012.

credibility and fulfillment of targets. The need to approve the structural reforms and fiscal adjustments led to an increase in information on international political and economic policies. The front pages of *Povo Livre* tended to

feature its own general political rhetoric. The use of expressions like “resist and win” or “for a better life” shows some of the editorial choices, though they allow many interpretations of the subject or focus area.

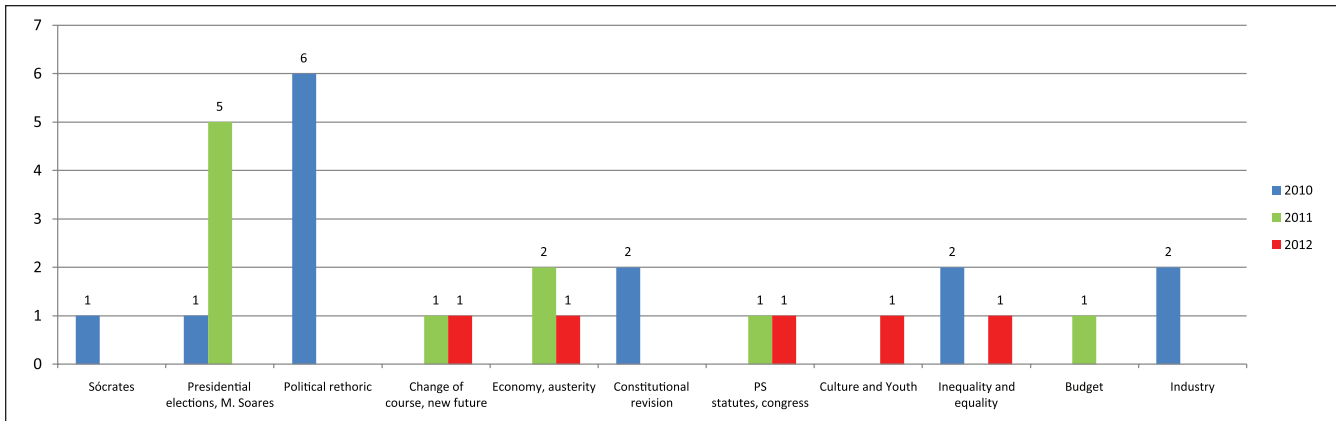


Figure 5. Front-page news of *Acção Socialista*: Subjects addressed—2010, 2011, 2012.

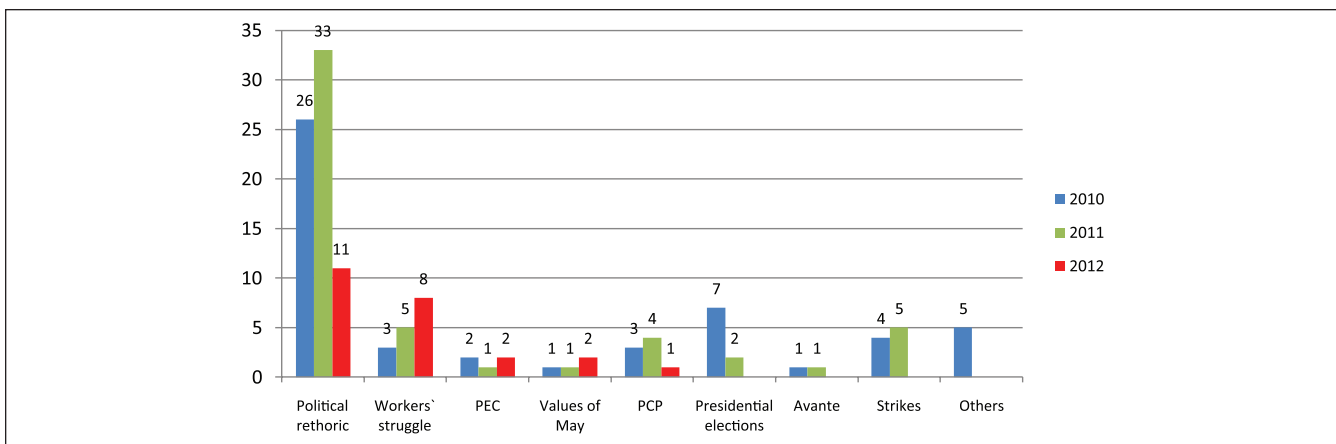


Figure 6. Front-page news of *Avante*: Subjects addressed—2010, 2011, 2012.

The format of the front pages of *Acção Socialista*, the iconography chosen, and the words used enable us to make a more detailed analysis of the subjects (see Figure 5). In 2010, six of the 14 issues of *Acção Socialista* featured the party's official political discourse, while the others focused on a wide range of subjects. We find that the business sector, a question of gender equality and parity in society, and the revision of the Constitution occupied two issues each, while the presidential elections and unity around the leader, José Sócrates, were the focus of one. This shows greater use of the political agenda in front-page news in *Acção Socialista*.

The scenario in 2011 was more varied, though the dominant subject was the elections for the party leadership in July 2011. The June issue (parliamentary election month) focused on the PS leadership candidates and not on the PSD's victory in the elections. The electoral campaign and the need to encourage militants to vote explain this option. All paid-up members receive the newspaper every month, so it is a direct way of fostering their participation in party elections.¹¹ Three issues criticize the austerity caused by the measures approved in the Financial Adjustment Plan and the government's fiscal policy.

The presidential elections (Manuel Alegre), the socialist congress that made José António Seguro leader, and a large interview with Mário Soares were the other highlights in *Acção Socialista* that year. The change in these 2 years can be explained by the alternation of power, as the PS was in government in 2010, but moved to the opposition after the 2011 parliamentary elections. This explains the more critical tone of the 2011 issues about the national policy of the 19th Constitutional Government. Although the tone is more critical in the 2011 issues, none of them directly criticizes the government parties or their leaders, that is, the focus is on the measures. The newspaper's structure allows for the inclusion of non-political areas, such as literature, cinema, science, and culture.

The analysis shows the *Avante's* combative nature, with regular use of subjects that portray the workers' struggle and rights. The PCP has always taken on the role of political defender of the proletariat and is one of the most active institutions in publicizing sectoral or general strikes. Many issues use imperatives ordering readers to play an active part in the workers' struggle. There were also three issues that extolled the party's role in the fight for better social and labor conditions (see Figure 6).

There was a slight change in the subjects addressed in 2011, with a clear increase in political rhetoric associated with its criticism of the Financial Adjustment Programme. There is constant use of the words “struggle” and “sovereignty” that show a consistent line in the political message. The aim is to step up the struggle against policies to guarantee national sovereignty against outside intervention. We cannot, however, assume a change in political discourse after the change in government. In a year of presidential and parliamentary elections, seven front pages were devoted exclusively to a call to vote (“Your vote makes a difference,” “CDU now”). The call was a direct one and the newspaper was a vehicle for the party’s electoral campaign. The call is always to vote for the CDU (*United Democratic Coalition*), as PCP runs with *Partido Ecologista Os Verdes*, a coalition made in 1987.

Following on from 2010, the main theme of more issues was strikes, while the International Monetary Fund (or troika) occupied the front page in four issues. The party’s official position was reflected in *Avante*’s message, that is, clear opposition to the agreement and the need to show this opposition in “street protests.”

In 2012, *Avante* shows a clear division between issues focusing on generic political discourse and the workers’ struggle in a period that witnessed successive collective redundancies, layoffs, and transfer of workers. This perspective followed on from the dramatization of the political discourse against current policies.

Avante is the party newspaper with the greatest wealth of diversity on its front pages and in the images used. Although we can establish a pattern in photos of demonstrations, slogans, or celebration of certain dates (25 April, 1 May, or the party’s anniversary), the information and editorial choices are constantly adapted to current national and international political and economic events.

There are six lines in terms of front-page options in these issues:

- regular use of pictures of demonstrations and street protests in defense of labor and social rights thereby strengthening the spirit of collective struggle;
- use of slogans appealing for civic participation in the struggle;
- the use of black as the color of austerity and the erratic policies of successive governments and the Troika;
- recourse to anonymous members of the public to represent difficulties experienced and rising poverty in the country (e.g., elderly women and men images) and as hope for a better future (e.g., children images);
- focus on patriotism and the defense of domestic production and focus on workers’ labor as the driving force of the country’s development.
- The format favors red in headlines and titles and a substantial amount of information on the front page plus indications of the subjects covered in the issue.

With the exception of the 2011 presidential elections, in which Francisco Lopes was used several times to appeal for votes, there are very few issues referring to PCP leaders or figures. In the past, only one of the front pages analyzed made reference to Lenin, historic leader of the Soviet Communist Party. The content focuses mainly on the PCP’s political position in important domestic and international matters. In other words, *Avante* takes a more informative perspective than the others and provides militants and sympathizers with information enabling them to play their part in the daily fight for communist values.

In *Avante*’s analysis, it is important to mention direct references to “political censorship,” the “struggle of the masses,” and use of the “people” to assert the values of the April revolution and the party itself. This is one of the pillars of *Avante*’s communication, and there are very few issues in which the focus is on individuals, as workers’ and the people’s unity is the driving force in the communist struggle.

Conclusion

This article examines and concludes that party newspapers are open to other current events and avoid focusing all their content on purely party information. This trend has been accompanied by the development of new technologies and the newspapers’ attempt to reach more readers and reconcile the traditional paper form with an online version. This demonstrates the importance of party newspapers as the official organs, links between the parties, and their grassroots.

The party newspapers are published regularly, are easily accessible, and constitute a tool for disseminating the party’s political positions (of their leaders and parliamentary groups) and local branches’ activities. But does the party press still make sense in a globalized world based on an increasing number of civic movements far from the parties and limited to the defense of party ideology? There is no single answer to this question: We can say that the purpose of these newspapers persists and they occupy their own place in the party. It is important to assess whether they are published for wider reasons than mere party propaganda. In this respect, we cannot conclude that the publications go down that road, as none is intended to replace the traditional press, based on independence and impartiality.

In terms of strategies for communicating the contents and resources, although, there are some similarities in the structure of party newspapers examined; in terms of areas covered, there are significant variations in each one’s focus. The front page of *Povo Livre* extols the figure of the leader and does not vary the way in which he is presented. His ideas and plan dominate most of the issues, in contrast with a more pluralistic vision from *Acção Socialista*, which regularly portrays other party figures and *Avante*, whose issues are constantly calling for the workers’ struggle. In other words, the appeal to the masses is in clear contrast to the image of a strong leadership revolving around a personality cult. There

is also the fact that *Avante* is the only newspaper that regularly uses symbols to transmit political messages. We therefore have greater variety in images and subjects. In *Povo Livre*, political discourse predominates as the main topic, while in *Acção Socialista*, current political news decisively determines front-page options and subjects covered. Definitely personalization is not a predominant characteristic of the party newspapers communication strategy. In the three ideologically different newspapers selected, only the social-democratic newspaper tended to emphasize the party leader image and message. The socialists and communists newspapers tended to emphasize the anonymous and mass perspective of the message. These two different party approaches, on building a political message, stress a consistent role of party newspapers in reinforcing the party's political identity, certainly hoping to promote a specific party image in society.

The fight for labor and social rights dominates the discourse in *Avante*, while the political game prevails on the front pages of *Povo Livre* and the political agenda is portrayed more consistently in *Acção Socialista*. The same thing happens when we analyze the weight of images and words in the newspapers' content. *Povo Livre* and *Acção Socialista* use the first person (party members) in interviews or descriptions of opinions and events, while *Avante* uses the imperative to appeal for a joint effort in fighting the government's policies.

The party press is a faithful portrait of the party, or more precisely its directors' political line. While this limits the plurality of ideas on one hand, it reinforces the newspapers' crucial role in disseminating the party's policies to its militants. But is this purpose viable as militants decrease in number? Can it be reconciled with the necessary political fight? It will be important in future research to verify the newspapers' readers to obtain their feedback and assess the importance of the party press in the militants' party training. Party newspapers are a strong pillar in internal party communication and resistant to all electoral victories and defeats in recent decades, and so they play their own important role in the political communication process.

After this study, a number of basic questions are raised about the relationship between communication, the press, and party politics. What space in the party cult can be reserved for the party press in political and journalistic terms? Is a change of communication strategy by the party press the answer to the speed and impatience in the progress of communication? Answers to these questions will contribute to consolidate future understanding of the importance of the party press in a scenario of strong political and communicational competition.

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Notes

1. A party/movement named Movimento de Esquerda Socialista (Movement of the Left Socialism): 1974-1981.
2. Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (Reorganizational Movement of the Proletariat Party): 1970 to 1976. In 1976, the party was re-founded and gave origin to PCTP/MRPP (Partido Comunista dos Trabalhadores Portugueses/Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado [Communist Party of Portuguese Workers/Reorganizational Movement of the Proletariat Party]; 1976-up to the present), an extreme-left wing party (based in the Maoist doctrine). Luta Popular is published since 1971.
3. A political authoritarian regime headed by the Prime Minister António Salazar, from 1931 to 1968, and then by Marcelo Caetano from 1968 to April 1974.
4. Since 1976, PS and PSD have been the two principal parties in the Portuguese government, in political cycles that lasted from 6 to 10 years.
5. None of the other parties with seats in parliament in the current legislature (CDS-PP, BE, and PEV—Centro Democrático e Social—Partido Popular [Democratic and Social Centre—Popular Party]; Bloco de Esquerda [Left Bloc]; Partido Ecologista os Verdes [Ecologist Party Greens]) publish a party newspaper at similar intervals. Of these, only the left-wing Bloco de Esquerda published a monthly newspaper, Esquerda, until mid-2010, after which it became a bimonthly magazine published only in hard-copy form.
6. In 2011, the resignation of José Sócrates (*Socialist Party*), heading the 18th Portuguese Government, was followed by new elections. Pedro Passos Coelho took office as Prime Minister, at the head of a coalition Government formed by the PSD (*Partido Social Democrata* [Social Democratic Party]) and CDS/PP (*Centro Democrático e Social—Partido Popular* [Democratic and Social Centre—Popular Party]).
7. Francisco Sá Carneiro was one of PSD founding leaders of PSD, and Prime Minister of Portugal, in 1980 (January 3–December 4). He was featured on two front pages of *Povo Livre* in 2010, in the issues analyzed.
8. Madeira is a Portuguese archipelago. It is known by its touristic environment and culture, and a long social democratic (PSD) leadership, headed by Alberto João Jardim (he was president of the regional government from 1978 to 2015).
9. Mário Soares was co-founder of the Socialist Party in 1973, Prime Minister (1976-1978, 1983-1985), and President of Portugal (1986-1996).
10. Aníbal Cavaco Silva was Minister of Finances (1980-1981), PSD leader (1985-1995), Prime Minister (1985-1995), and President of Portugal (2006-2016).
11. According to the PS Congress Organizing Committee, more than 35,000 militants voted in the elections, a figure very similar to the official print run of *Acção Socialista*. According to and in <http://www.ps.pt>

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Webography

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http://www.psd.pt/povo_livre.php

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