



2024 RSA Annual Conference

Global Challenges, Regional Collaboration and the Role of Places

SS42. Edgy Matters II: Geographies of Discontent and the Power Narrative

Between Places That Matter and Don't: Right-Wing Populism and the Political Awakening of Polish Inner Peripheries

Czesław Adamiak

Paweł Churski, Anna Dubownik, Maciej Pietrzykowski, Barbara Szyda

Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, Piotr Rosik



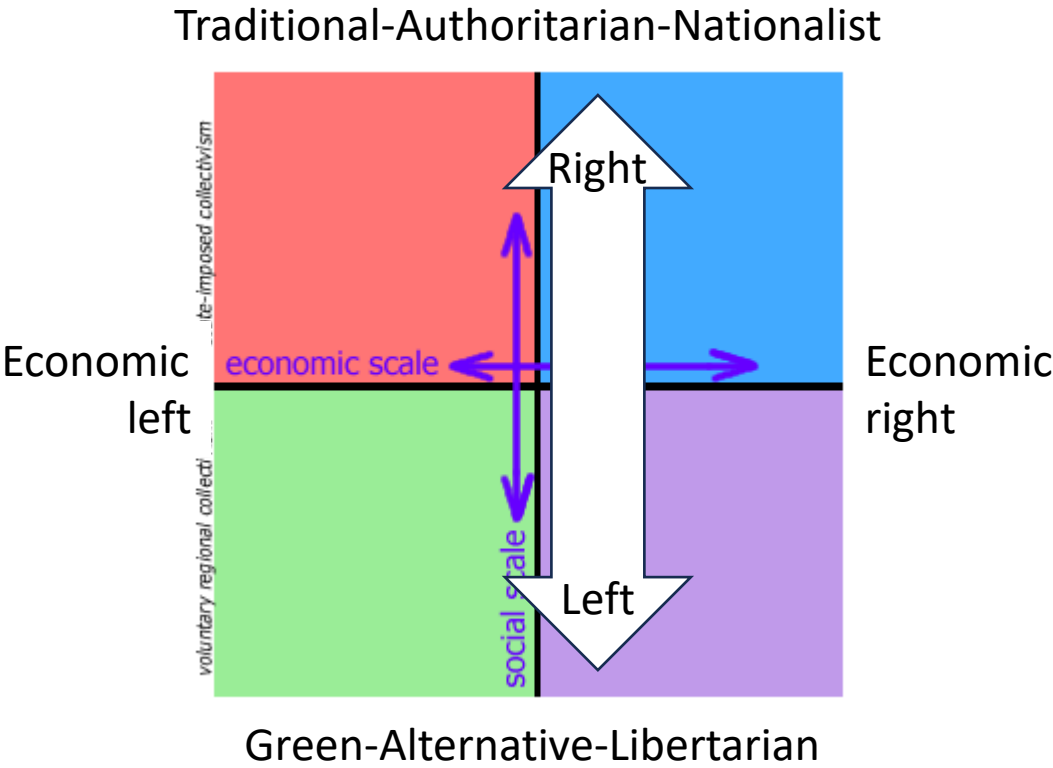
NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE
POLAND



Agenda

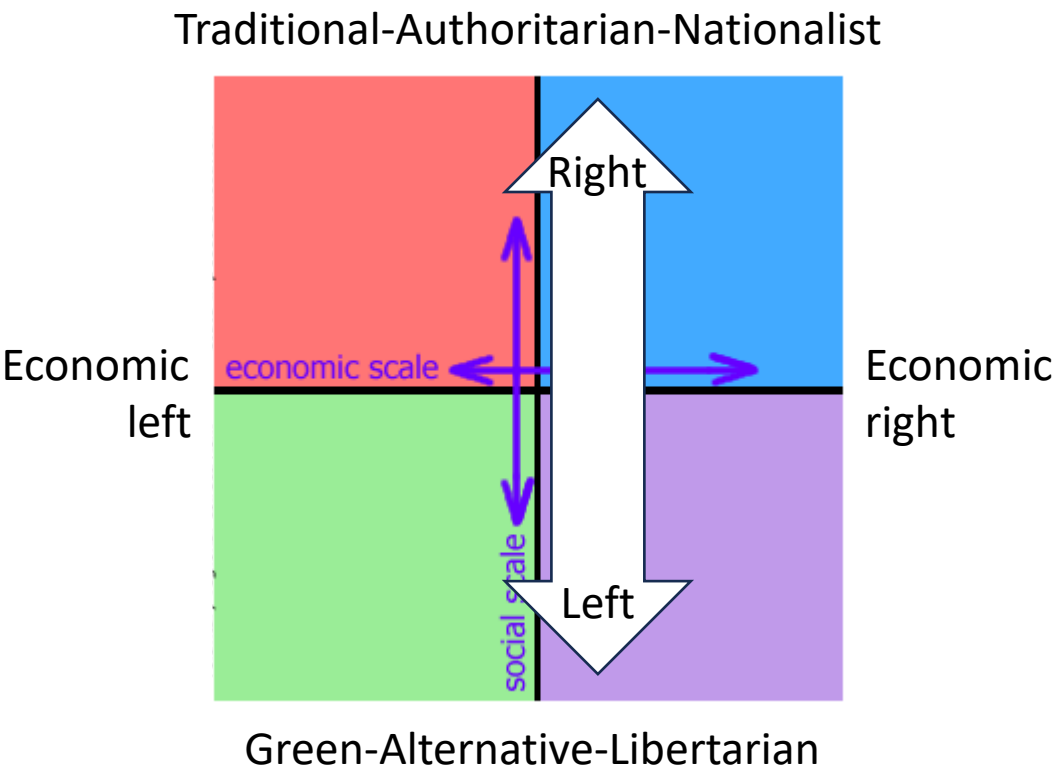
1. Geographies of right-wing populism in Europe
2. Politics, regional disparities and the inner peripheries
3. Polish experience: PiS victories and defeat 2015–2023
4. Explaining the dynamics of Polish parliamentary election results in the context of core-periphery spectrum
5. Discussion: conclusions, study limitations and implications

Political ideologies and populism

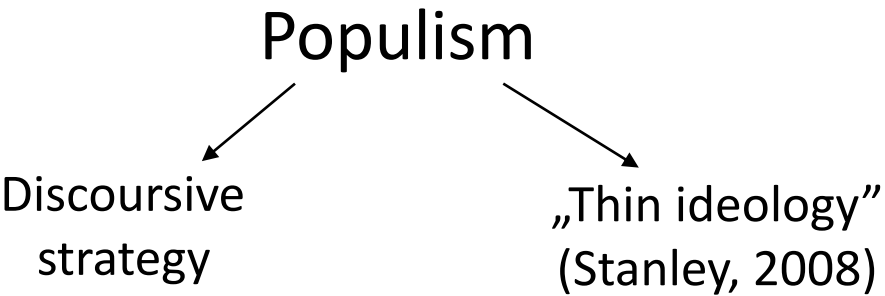
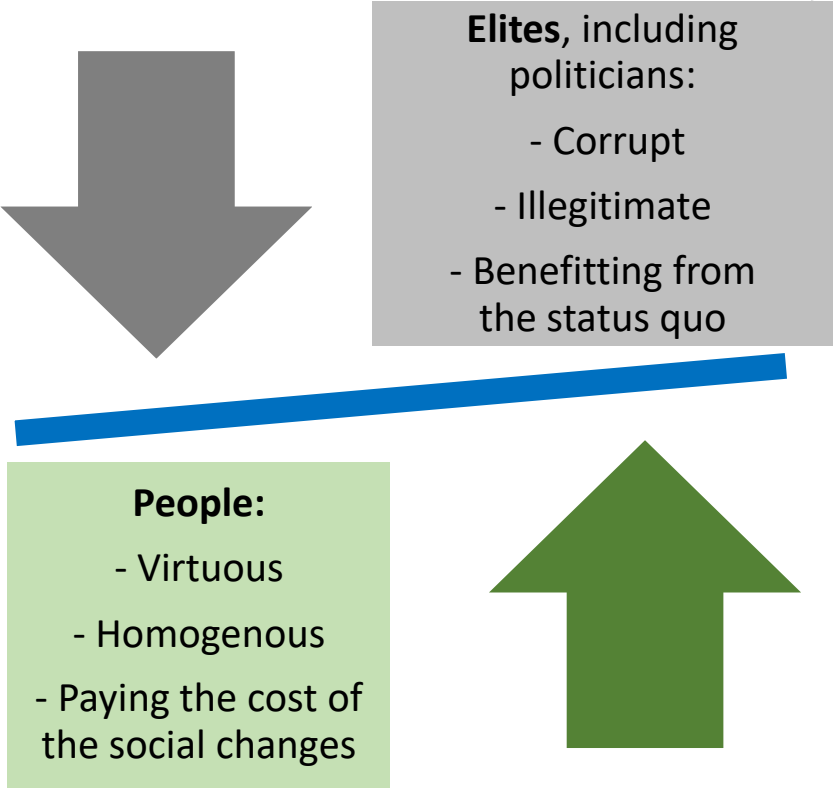


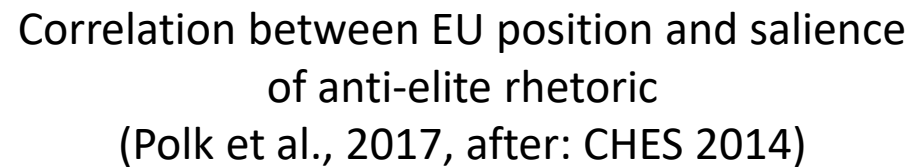
Polish political spectrum
 (based on
<https://www.politicalcompass.org/>)

Political ideologies and populism



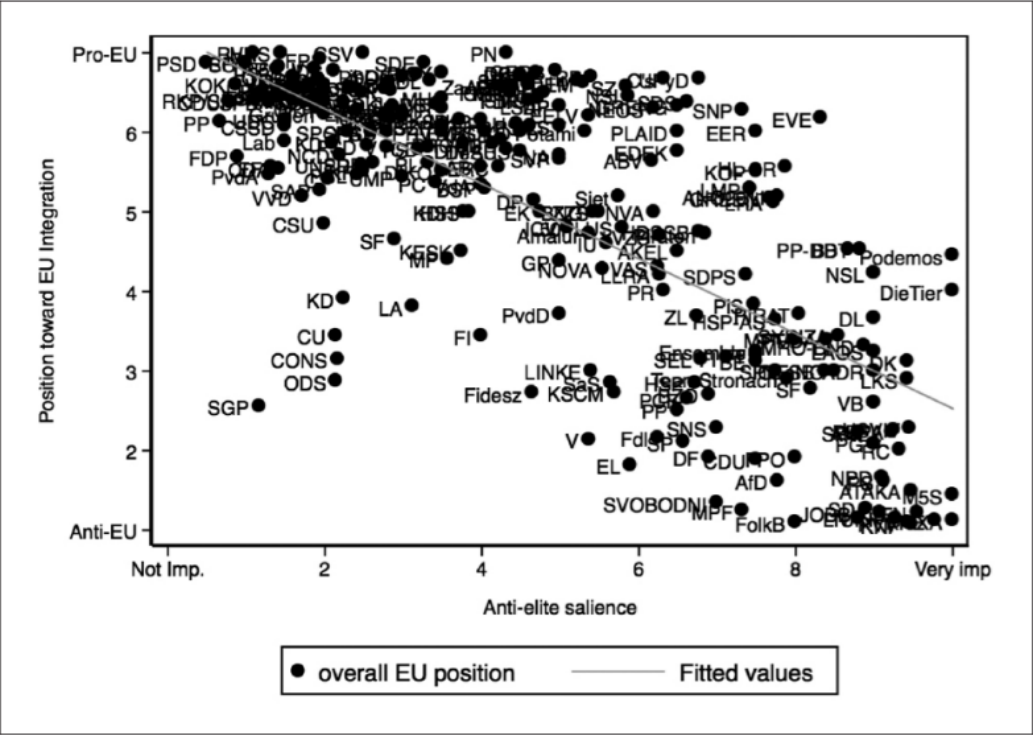
Political spectrum
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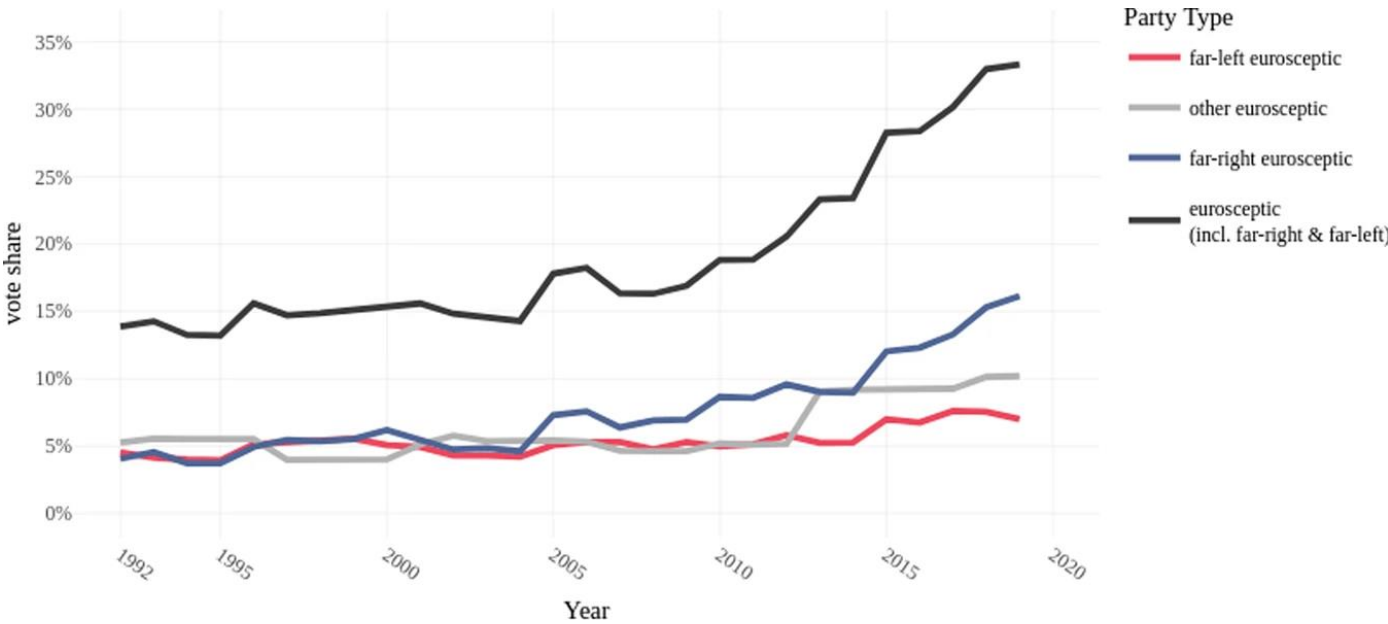


Correlation between EU position and salience
of anti-elite rhetoric
(Polk et al., 2017, after: CHES 2014)

Right-wing populism and Euroscepticism and transnational cleavage



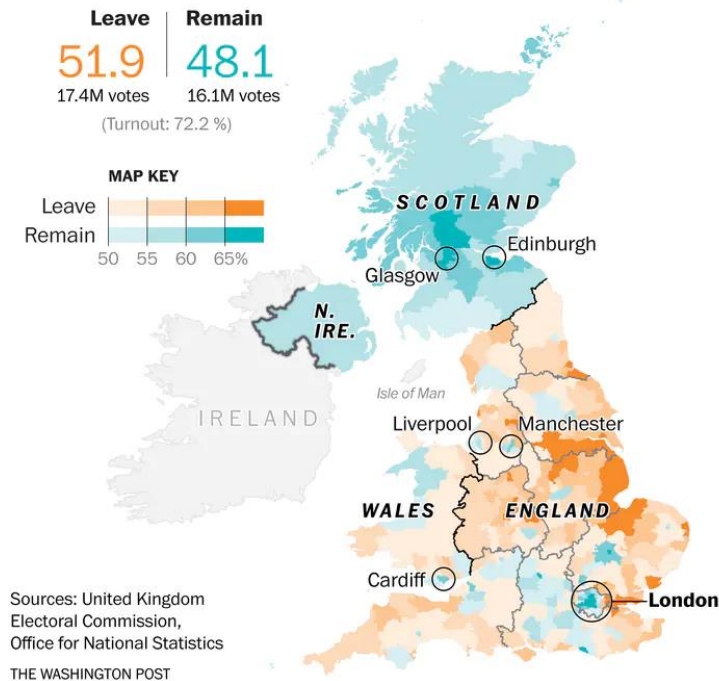
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Share of Eurosceptic, far-right and far-left parties votes in EU weighted by population size (Fortunato & Pecoraro, 2022)

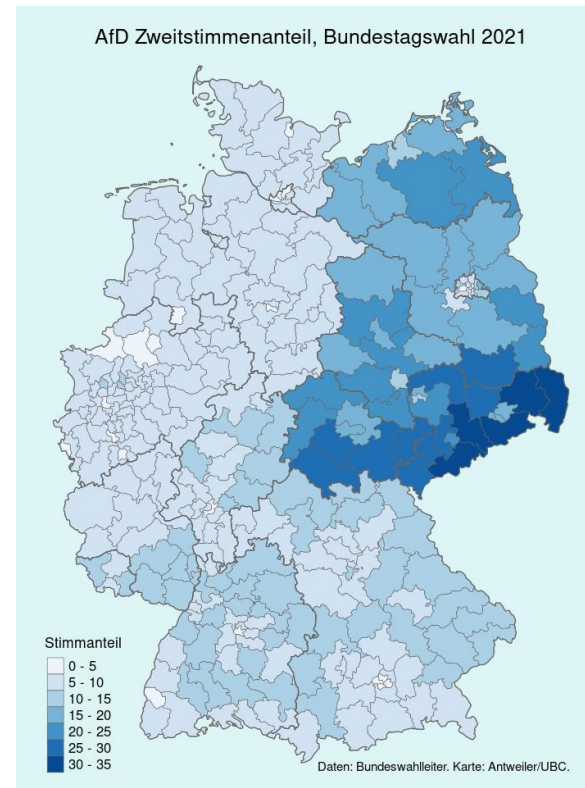
Geography of right-wing populism in Europe: The revenge of places that don't matter

Brexit referendum results



Brexit referendum 2016 results

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/24/this-map-shows-britains-striking-geographical-divide-over-brexit/>)

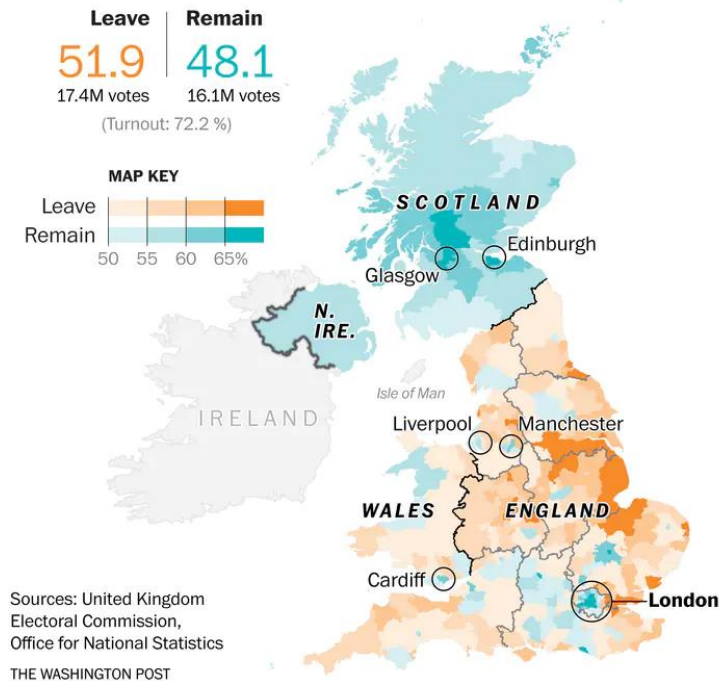


Share of voters for the Alternative für Deutschland in the federal parliamentary elections 2021

(<https://wernerantweiler.ca/blog.php?item=2021-10-02>)

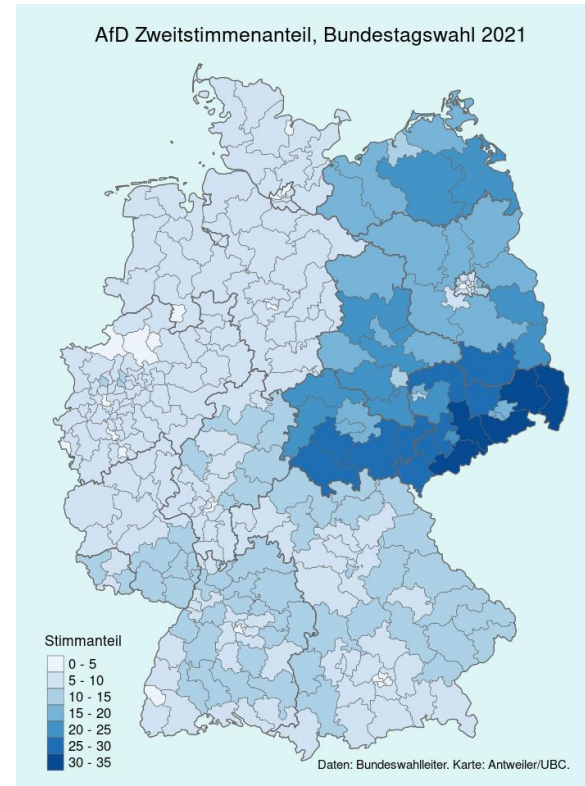
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Share of voters for the Alternative für Deutschland in the federal parliamentary elections 2021

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„Persistent poverty, economic decay, and lack of opportunities are at the root of considerable discontent in declining and lagging-behind areas...

...an increasing belief that these places have ‘no future’ – as economic dynamism has been posited to be increasingly dependent on agglomeration economies – have **led many of these so-called ‘places that don’t matter’ to revolt against the status quo...**”

Rodríguez-Pose, 2018,
The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it)

Inner Peripheries

remote areas
(Ardener 1987)
anthropological approach

periphery areas
(Hall et al. 2013)
geographical approach

periphery and semi-periphery
(Connell et al. 2005)
sociological approach

low-growth regions
(European Commission 2015)

lagging regions
(European Commission 2015)

low-income regions
(European Commission 2015)

left behind places
(McCann 2019)

INNER PERIPHERIES
(Servillo et al. 2016)

left behind people and places
(Dijkstra et al. 2020)



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund
Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

places that don't matter
(Rodríguez-Pose 2018)

places as loci of discontent
(Florida 2021; Martin 2021)



PROFECY – Processes, Features and
Cycles of IP in Europe



Inner Peripheries in Poland

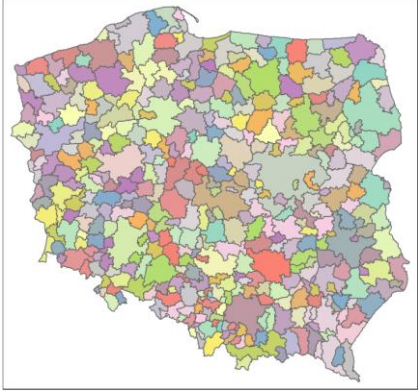
In our way of thinking, we understand the inner peripheries as areas with dormant or lost development potentials, due to their social or economic peripherality, caused in particular by low communication accessibility and a relatively long-time distance to economic centers, a limited range of functional connections and the lack of abilities or difficulties in establishing them permanently.

Their characteristic features are:

- relatively low efficiency of the territorial socio-economic system,
- relatively low access to public goods and services,
- relatively low quality of life (wellbeing).

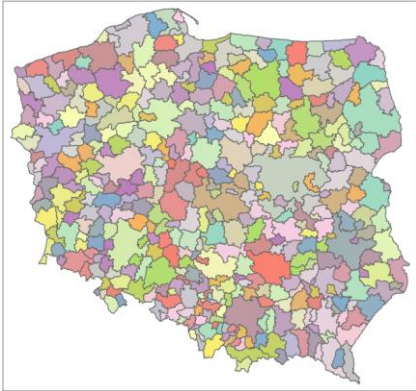


Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



Delimitation of 413
functional urban areas
(FUAs)

Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



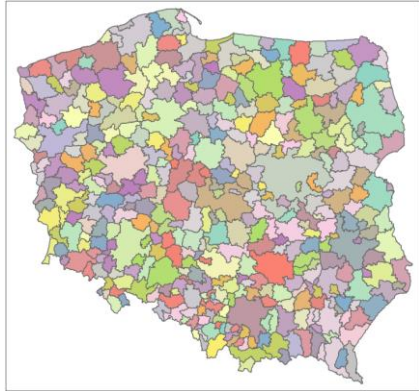
Delimitation of 413
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Classification based on 47
indicators of 9
dimensions of
peripherality

(Accessibility, Economy, Finances,
Demography, Housing, Health and
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Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



Delimitation of 413 functional urban areas (FUAs)

Classification based on 47 indicators of 9 dimensions of peripherality

(Accessibility, Economy, Finances, Demography, Housing, Health and security, Education, Leisure and social activity, Ecosystem services)

Core

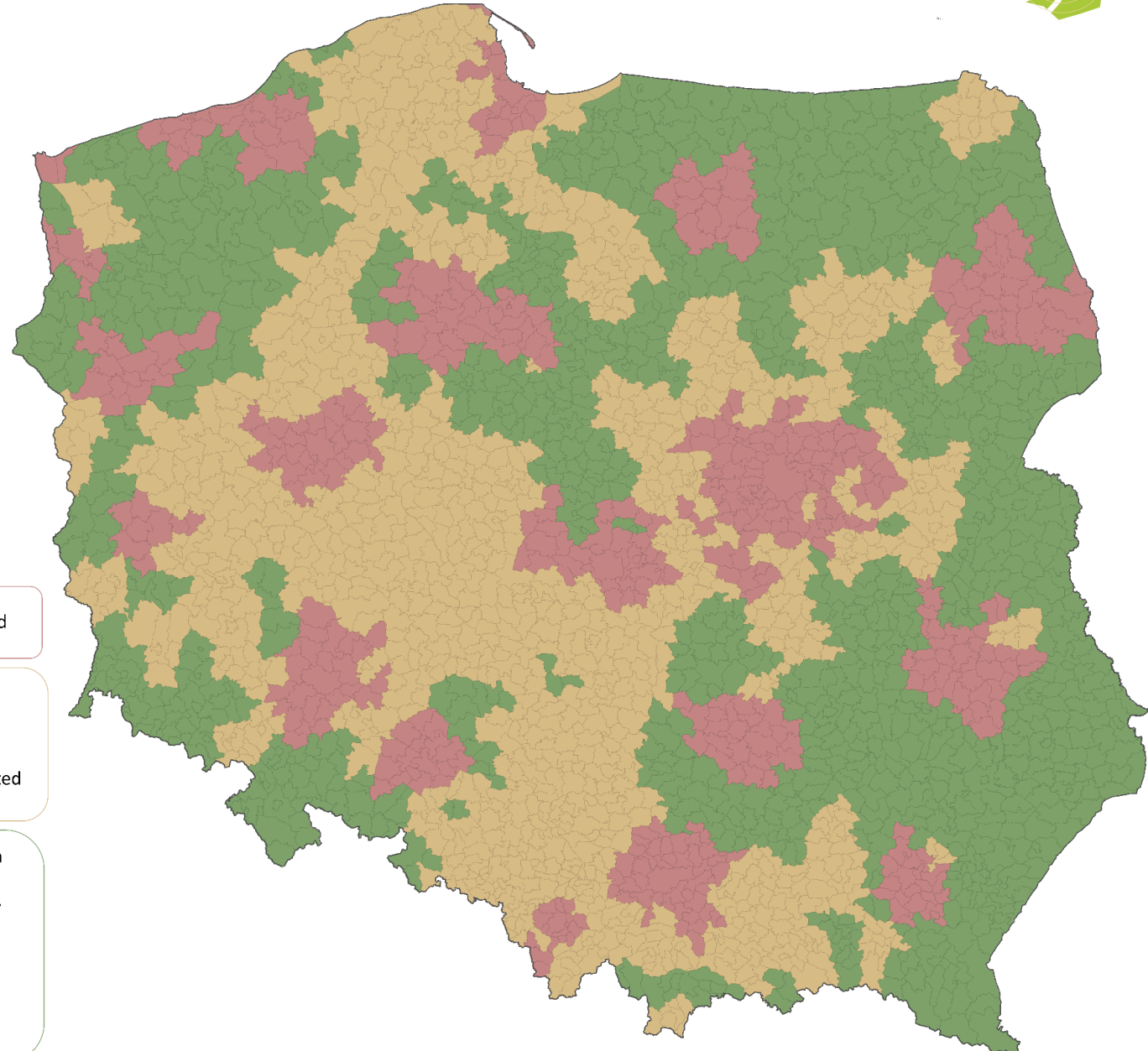
- 484 communes located within 25 functional urban areas of large cities (above 150,000 inhabitants) and regional centers

Intermediate

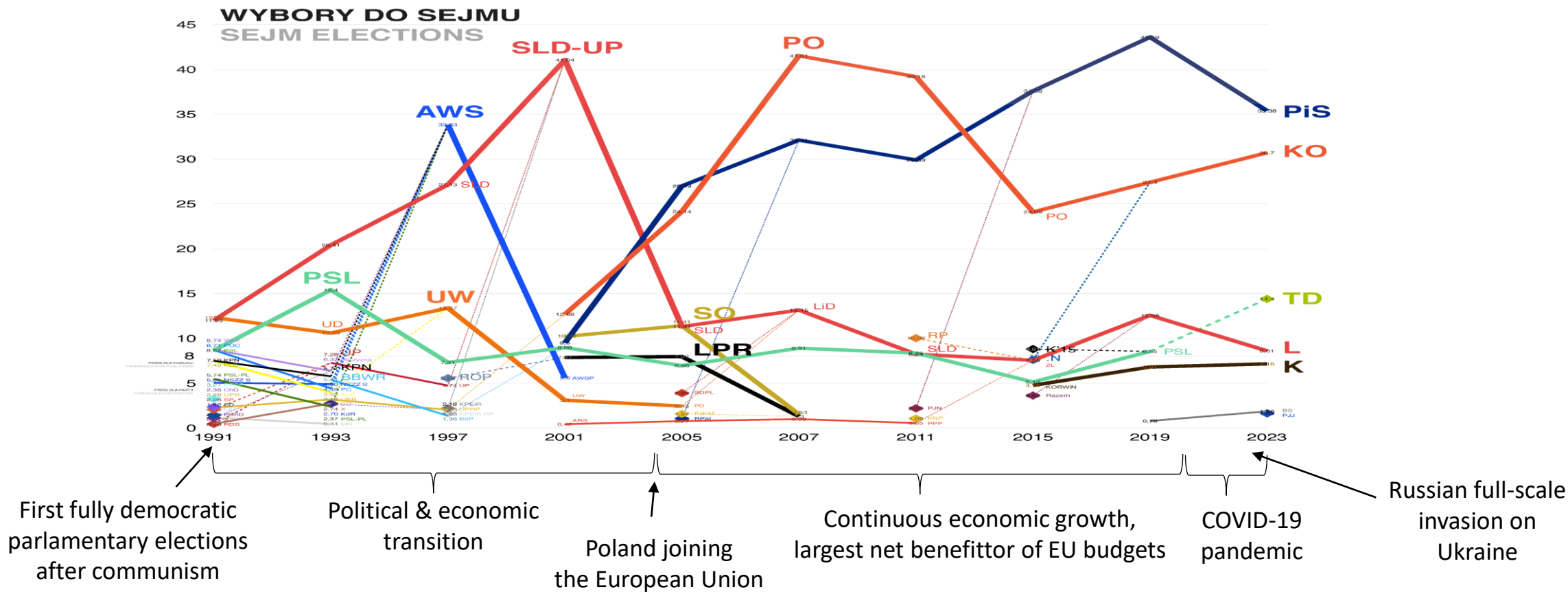
- 250 communes located within 39 functional urban areas of large and medium sized cities, mainly industrial cities in the Upper Silesian conurbation
- 781 communes located within 141 functional urban areas of middle-sized and small cities/towns, located primarily in the western part of the country

Peripheral

- 467 communes located within 112 functional urban areas classified as second-order inner peripheries, located in north-eastern and north-western Poland, strongly experienced through the system transformation
- 495 communes located within 96 functional urban areas classified as first-order inner peripheries, located mainly in eastern part of the country, on the geographical peripheries of the European Union

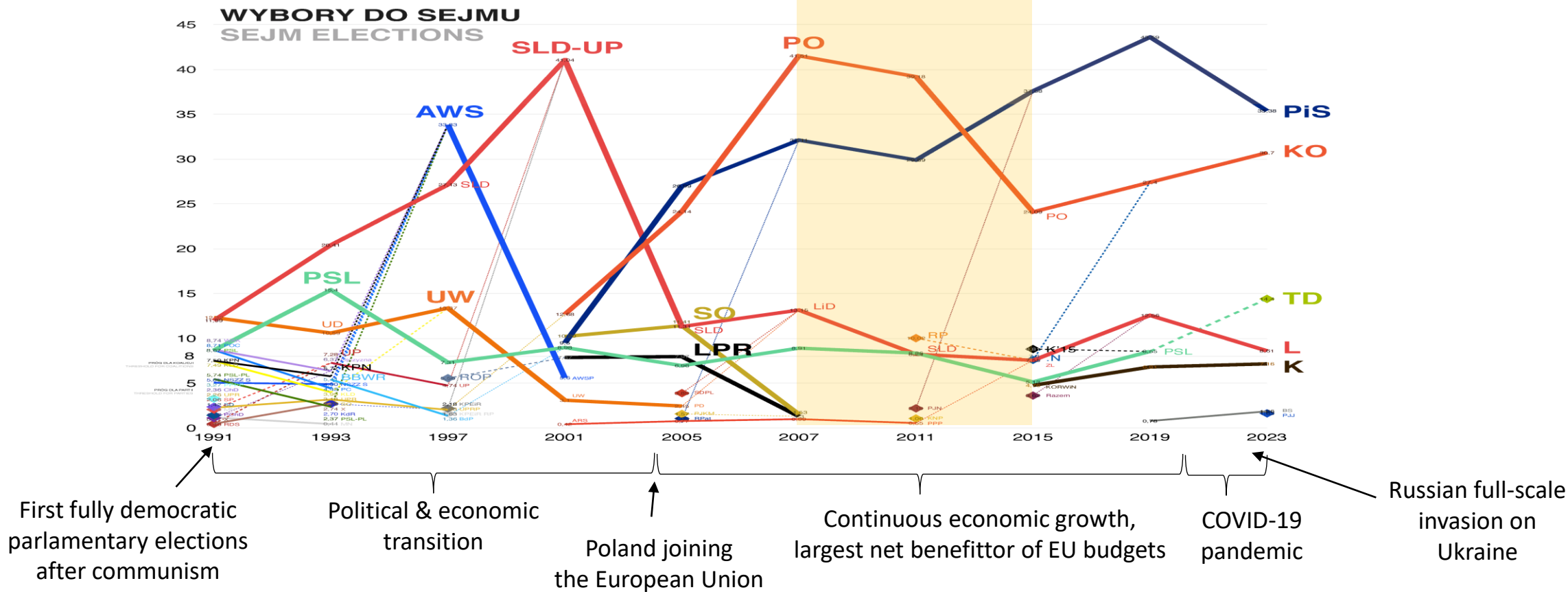


Law and Justice (PiS) rule in Poland 2015–2023



Law and Justice (PiS) rule in Poland 2015–2023

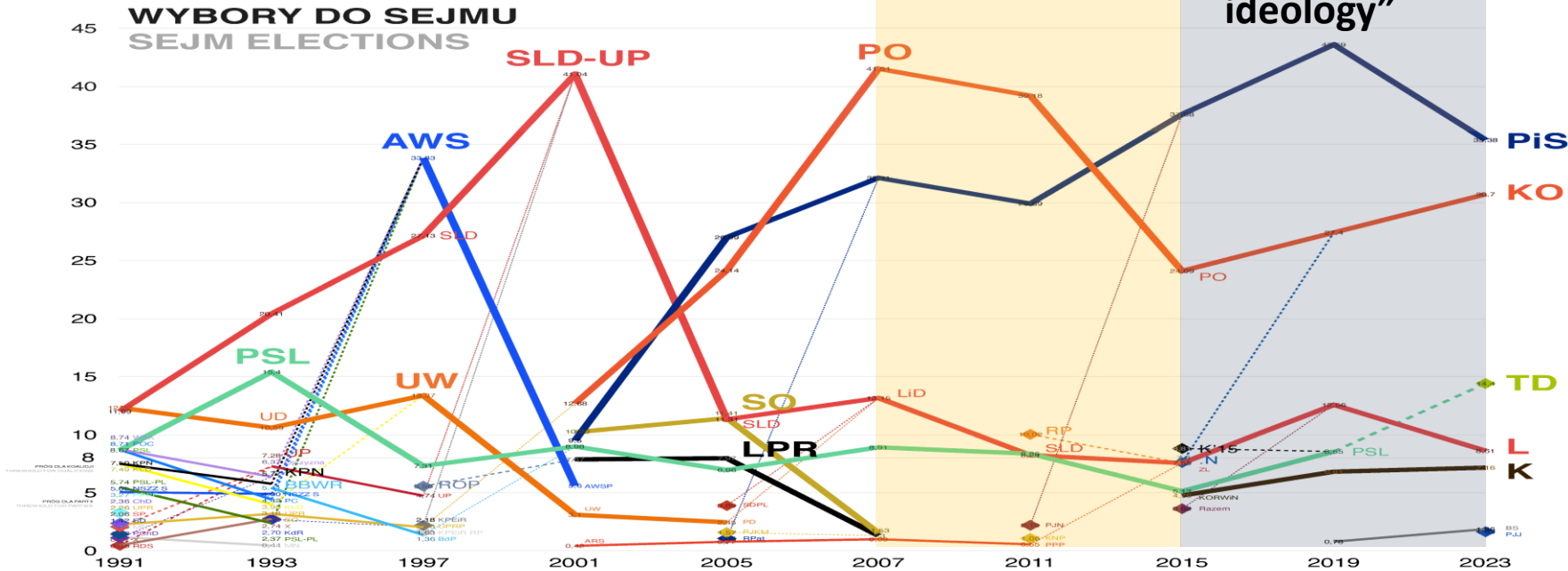
- PO-led coalition:
- Centrist
 - pro-European



Law and Justice (PiS) rule in Poland 2015–2023

- PiS:**
- Eurosceptic
 - Strong TAN
 - Pro-social economic policy
 - Populist „thin ideology”

- PO-led coalition:**
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First fully democratic parliamentary elections after communism

Political & economic transition

Poland joining the European Union

Continuous economic growth, largest net benefitor of EU budgets

COVID-19 pandemic

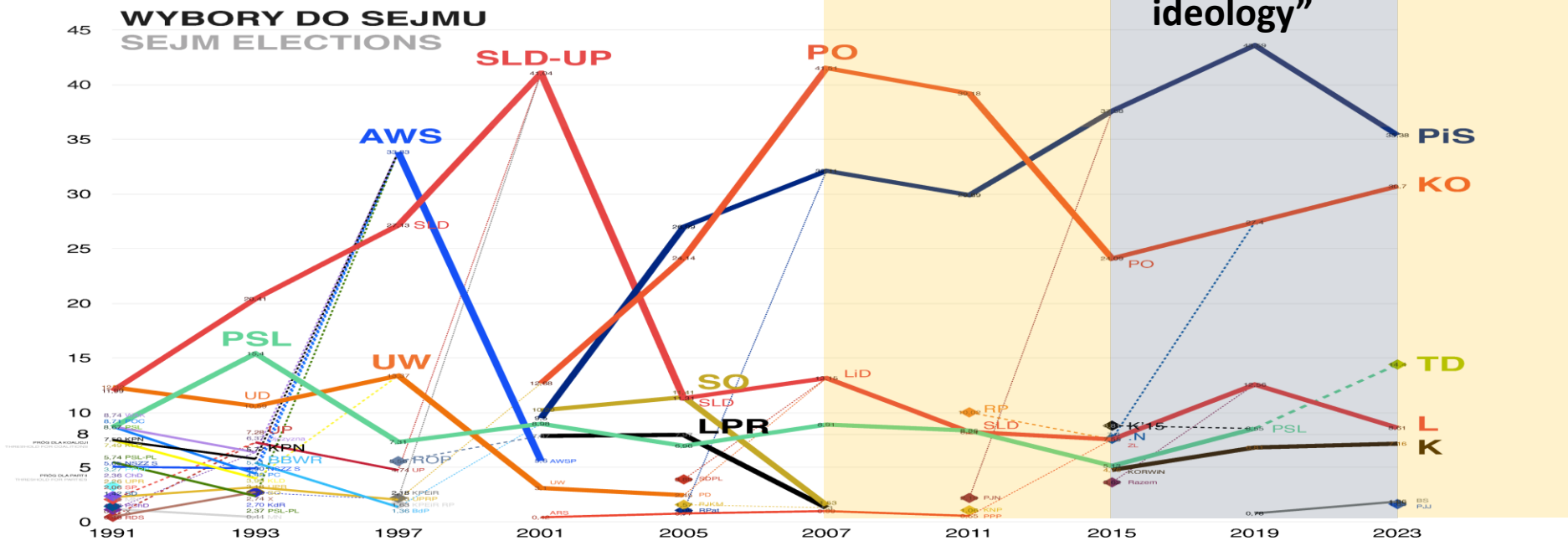
Russian full-scale invasion on Ukraine

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PO-led coalition



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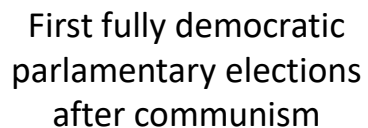
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PO-led coalition:

- Centrist
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PO-led coalition

Economy
doing well,
social
promises kept,
so why change
the
government?



Political & economic transition

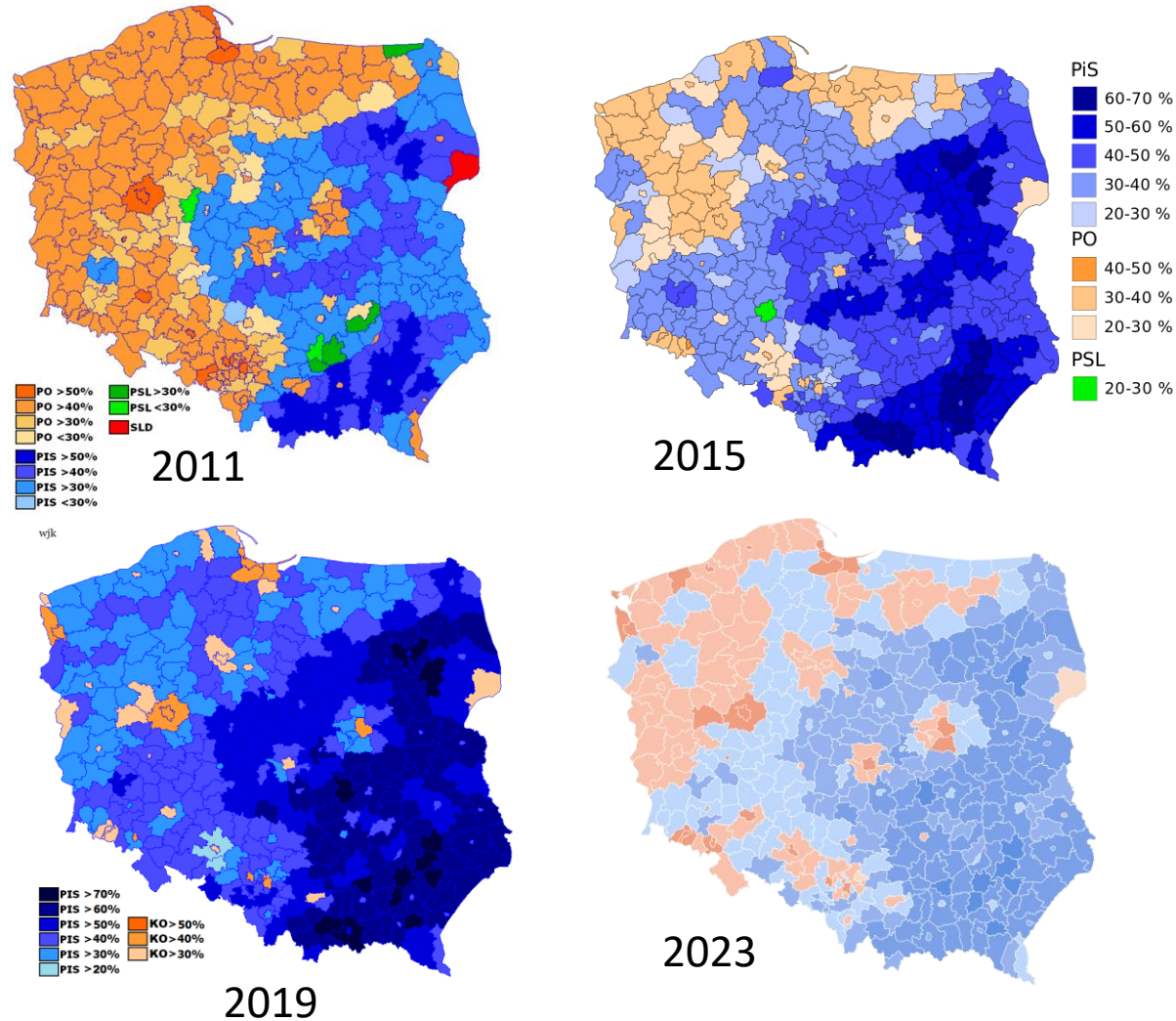
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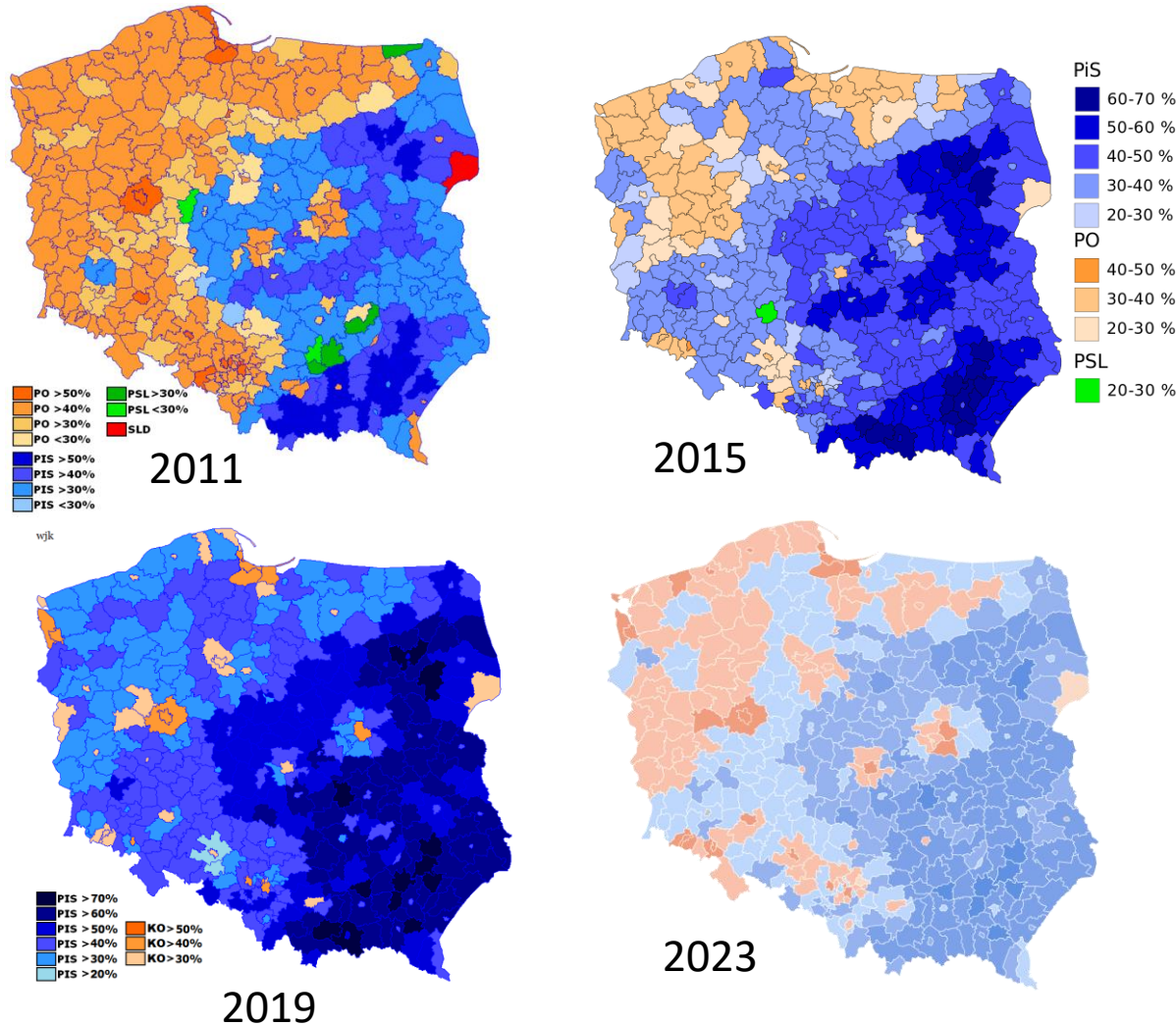
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Geographic differences in election results in Poland



Parlamentary election results in Poland – **blue is PiS**
(wikipedia.org)

Geographic differences in election results in Poland

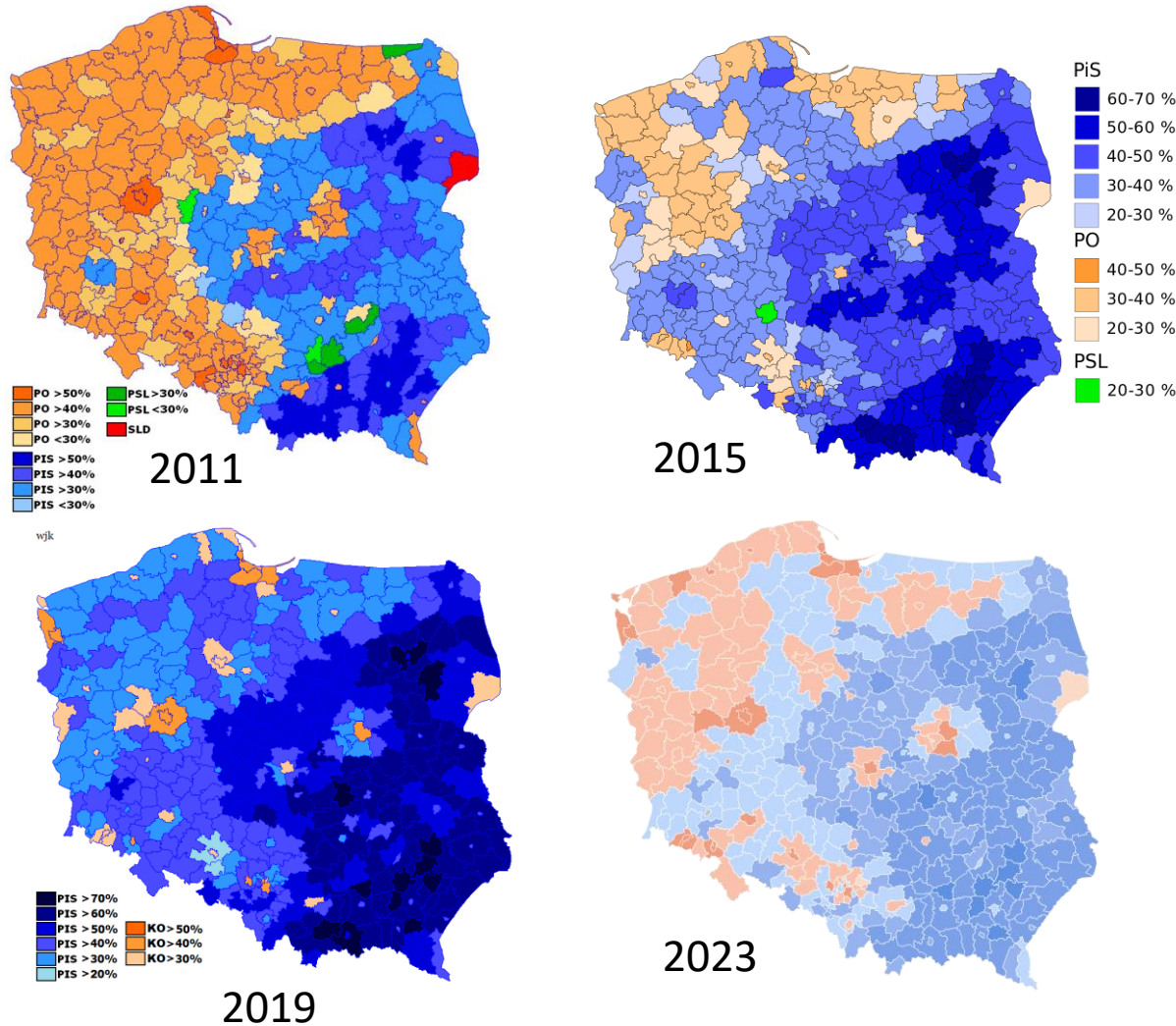


Possible reasons for geographic differences in electoral results:

- Urbanisation
- Level of economic development
- Ethnic minorities and regional identities
- International migration
- Differences in religiosity
- Historic differences

Parlamentary election results in Poland – **blue is PiS**
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Geographic differences in election results in Poland



Possible reasons for geographic differences in electoral results:

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- Differences in religiosity
- Historic differences

How much was the PiS success driven by the „revenge of places that do not matter”?

How have the core-periphery pattern shaped the political choices in the recent years?

Parlamentary election results in Poland – **blue is PiS**
(wikipedia.org)

Research data

Parliamentary elections to *Sejm* (lower chamber).

Four elections spanning PiS reach and defeat: 2011, 2015, 2019, 2023.

Non-voters matter!

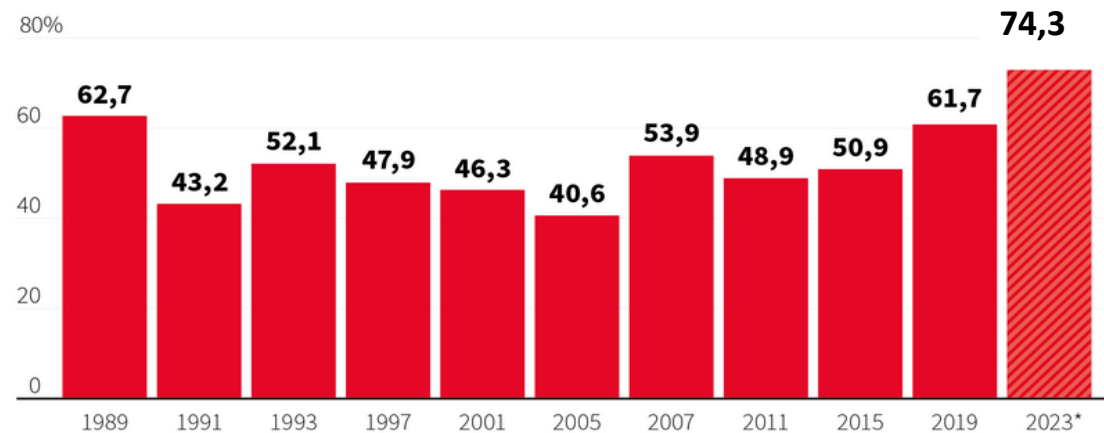
Therefore, we divide voters into three groups:

- PIS – supporting PiS,
- OTHERS – supporting other parties,
- NON-VOTERS – who did not vote.

Frekwencja w wyborach parlamentarnych

FREKWENCJA WYBORCZA W WYBORACH PARLAMENTARNYCH W POLSCE PO 1989 R.

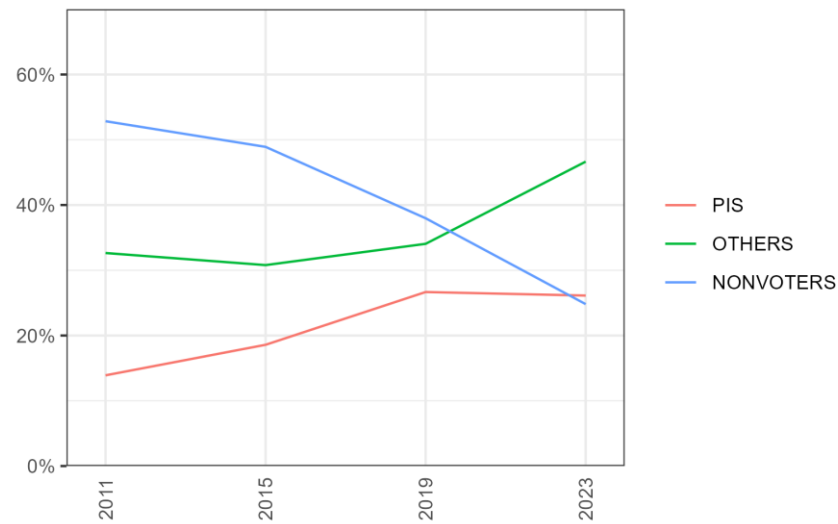
Dane w procentach



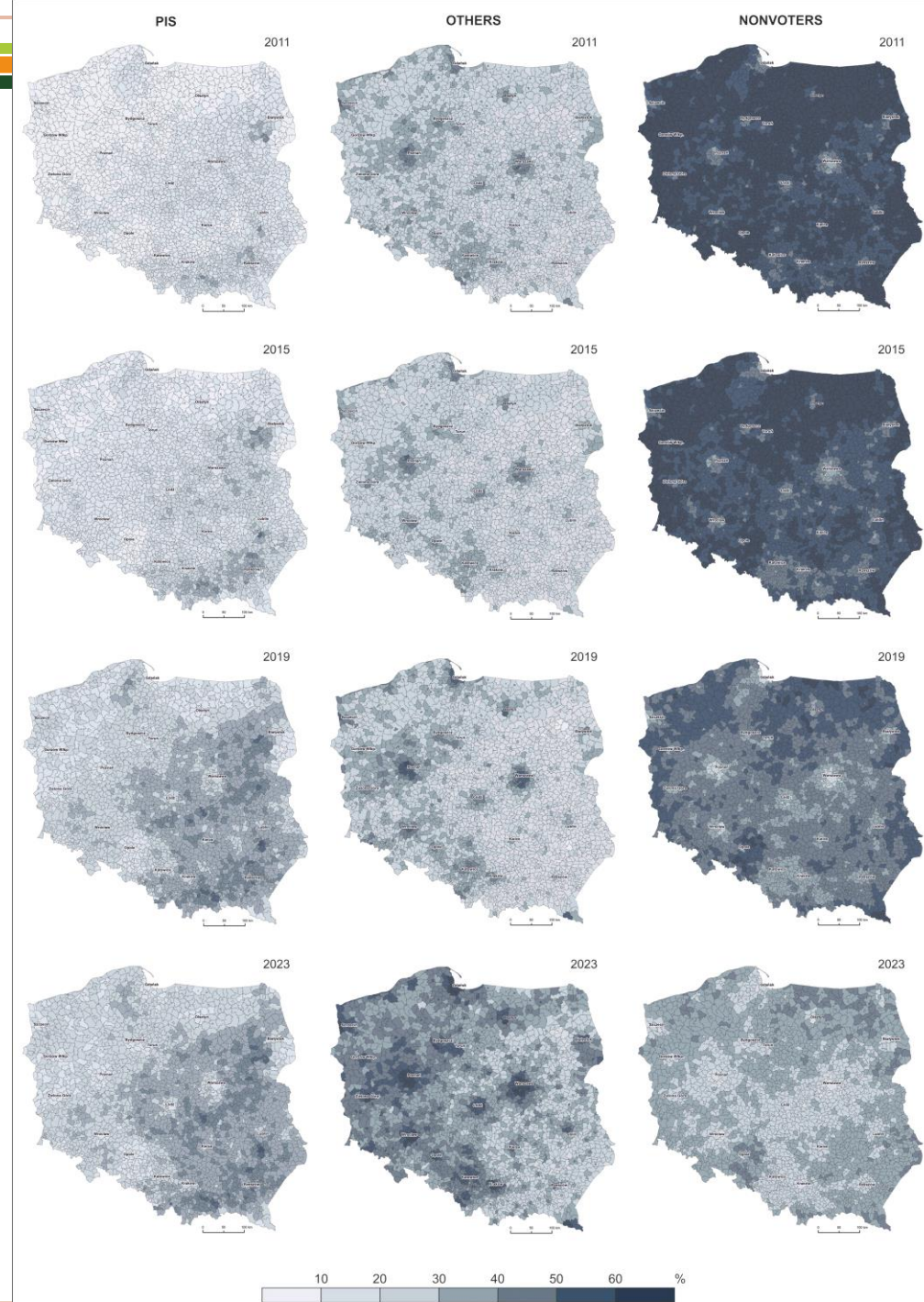
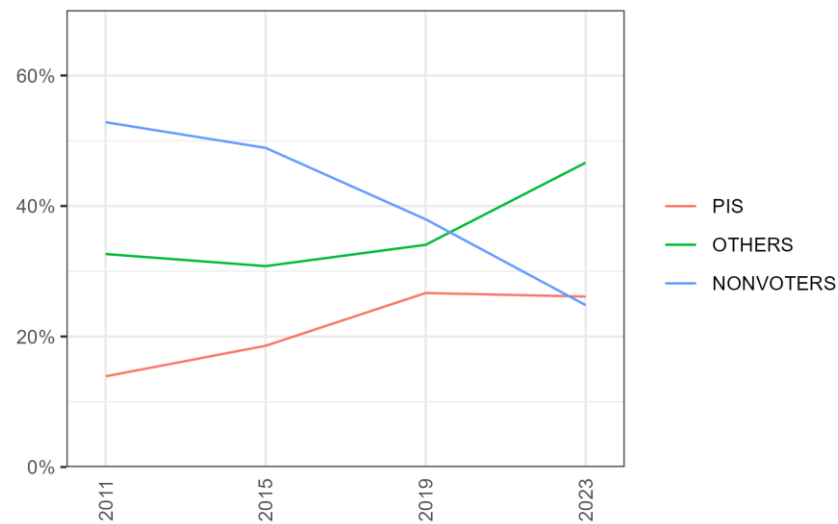
Źródło: PKW, *sondaż Ipsos late poll

Polish parliamentary elections
voter turnout

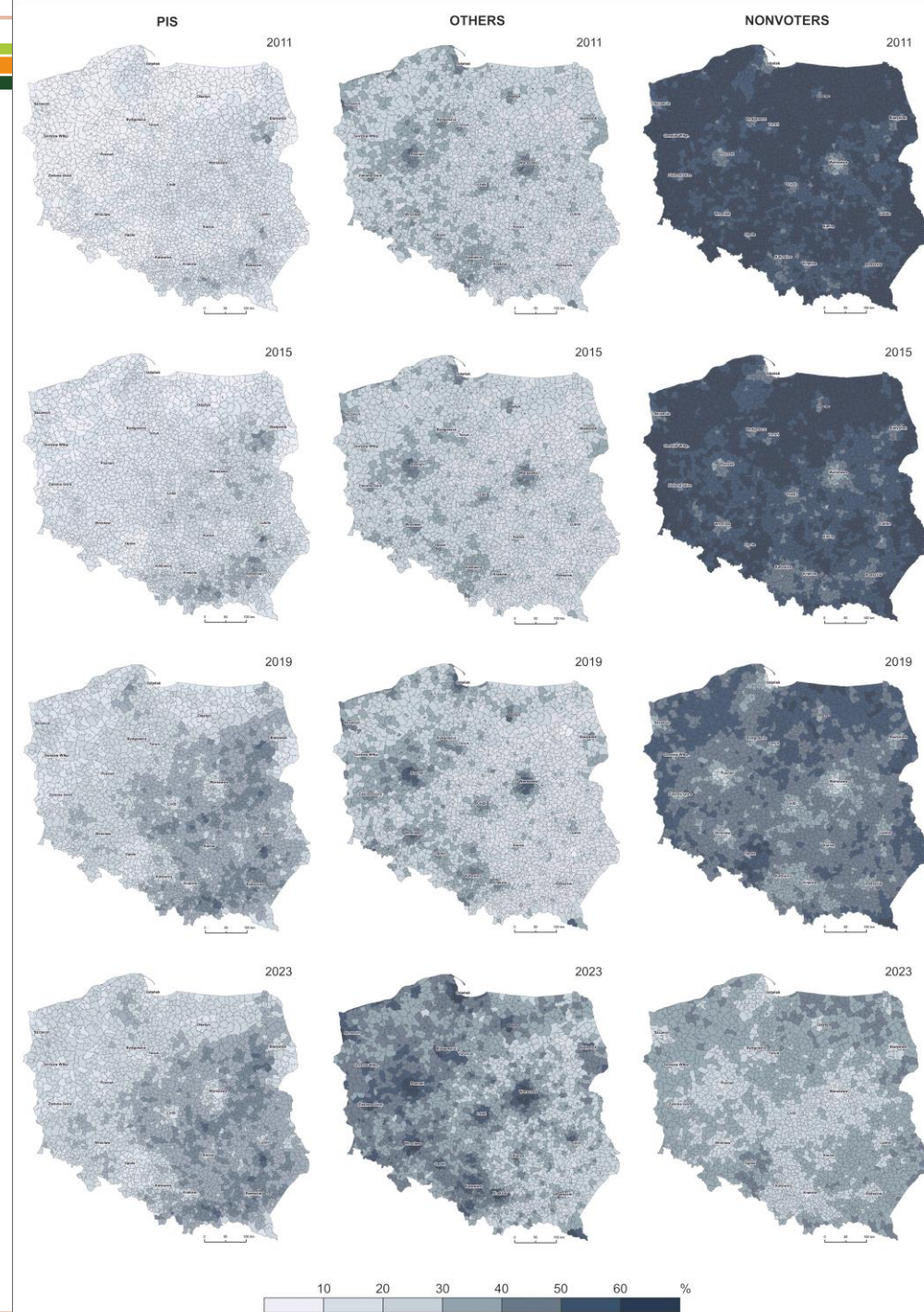
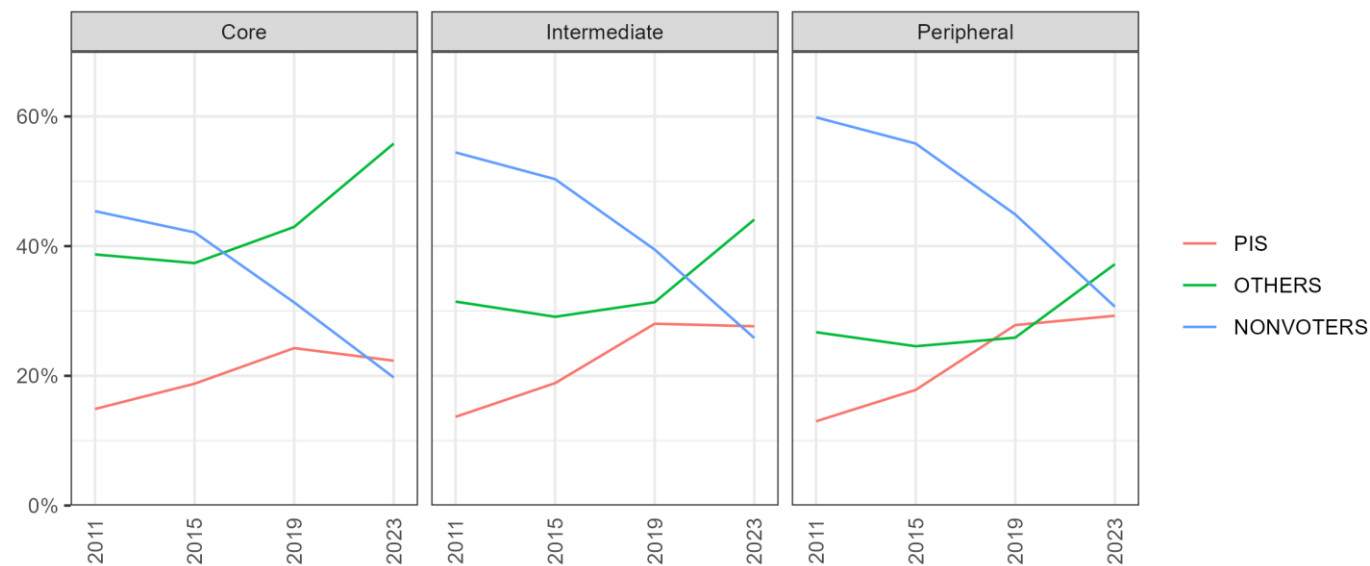
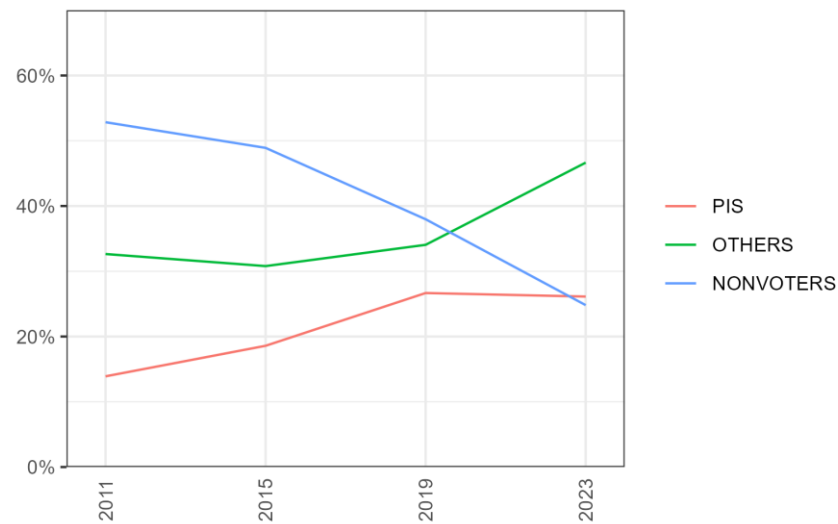
Parlamentary election results by area



Parlamentary election results by area



Parlamentary election results by area



Explanatory analysis

Hypotheses:

There is a political **polarisation between core areas and peripheries**:

H1a: After controlling for cultural differences, electoral support for the right-wing populist party (PiS) is higher in areas characterised by multidimensional peripherality.

H1b: After controlling for cultural differences, electoral support for parties opposing the right-wing populism party is higher in areas characterised by multidimensional centrality.

The political polarisation between core areas and peripheries in Poland **has grown in recent years**:

H2a: After controlling for cultural geographic differences, over the recent four parliamentary elections, electoral support for the right-wing populist party (PiS) has grown in areas characterised by multidimensional peripherality.

H2b: After controlling for cultural geographic differences, over the recent four parliamentary elections, electoral support for parties opposing the right-wing populism party has grown in areas characterised by multidimensional centrality.

Explanatory analysis

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Units of analysis: 2477 communes.

$$support_{i,t} = \alpha + \sum_{j=1}^3 \beta_j year_t + \sum_{k=1}^2 \beta_k GROUP_i + \sum_{m=1}^8 \beta_m \log(x_{m,i}) + \sum_{k=1}^2 \beta_{tk} year_t * GROUP_i + \sum_{m=1}^8 \beta_{tm} year_t * \log(x_{m,i}) + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

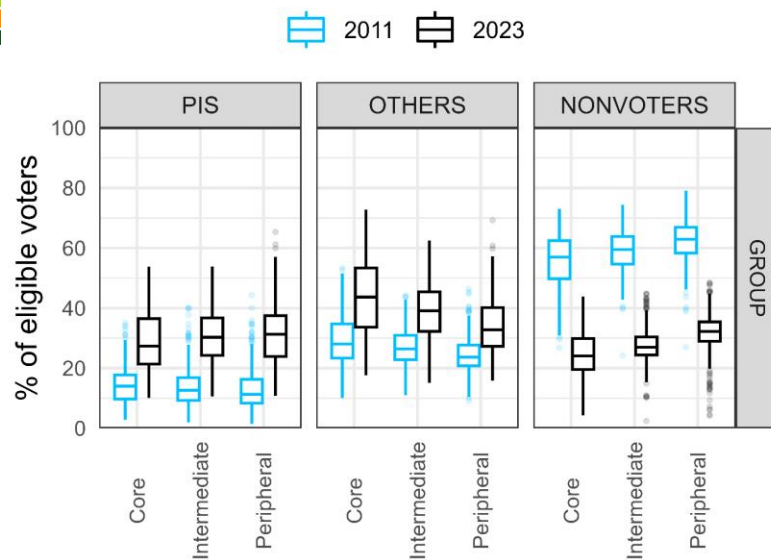
Electoral support for one of three options in commune i in the year t is the sum of the model intercept α , error term ε , and a set of products of coefficients β estimated for each individual variable (including year) and all combinations of years and variables.

Two categorical variables (year and group of communes) recoded into sets of dummy variables.

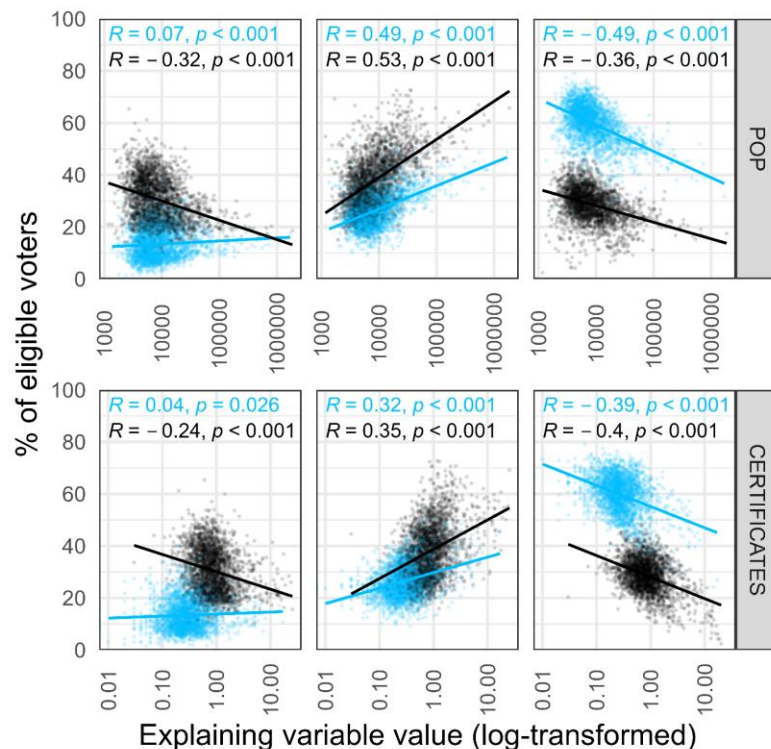
Seven remaining numeric variables are marked with x .

Variables in the models

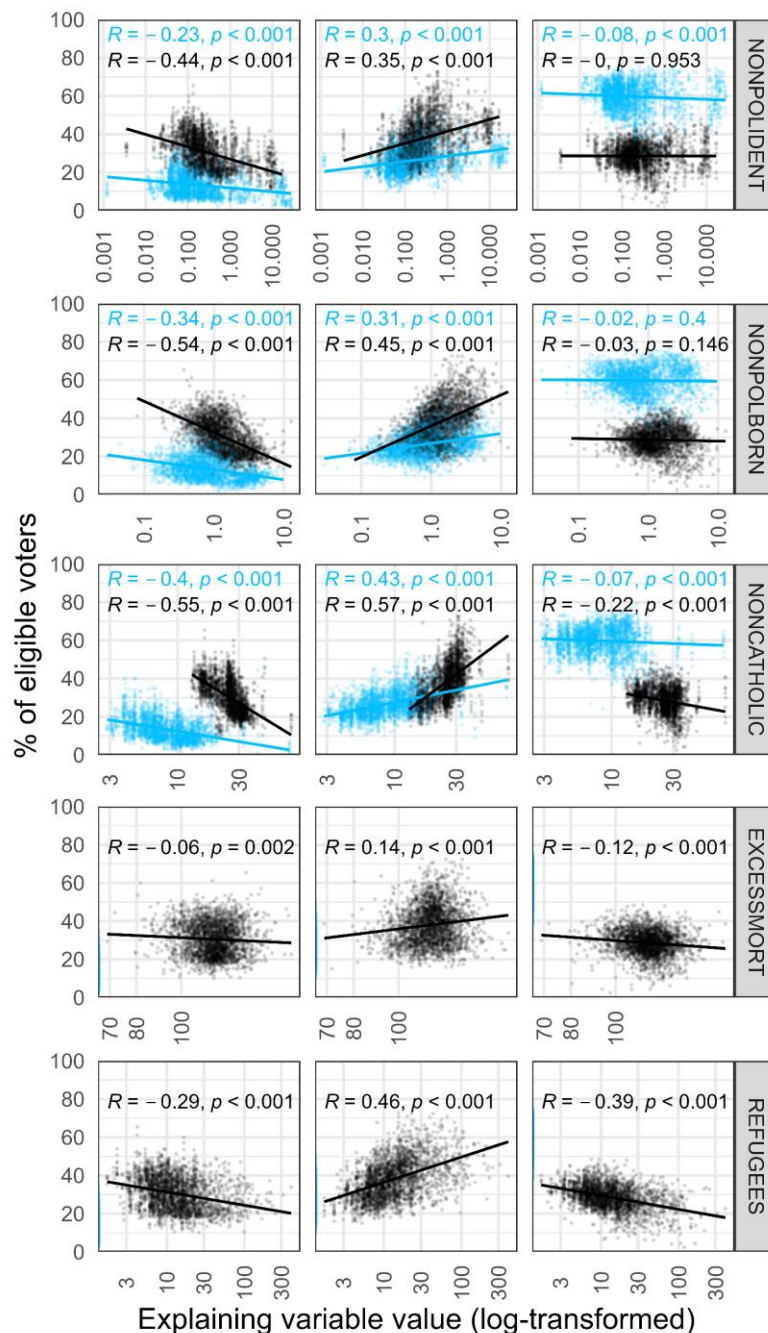
Group of communes according to FUA classification



Population of communes informs about intra-regional position in settlement structure



Controlling variable: share of voters living outside of the commune



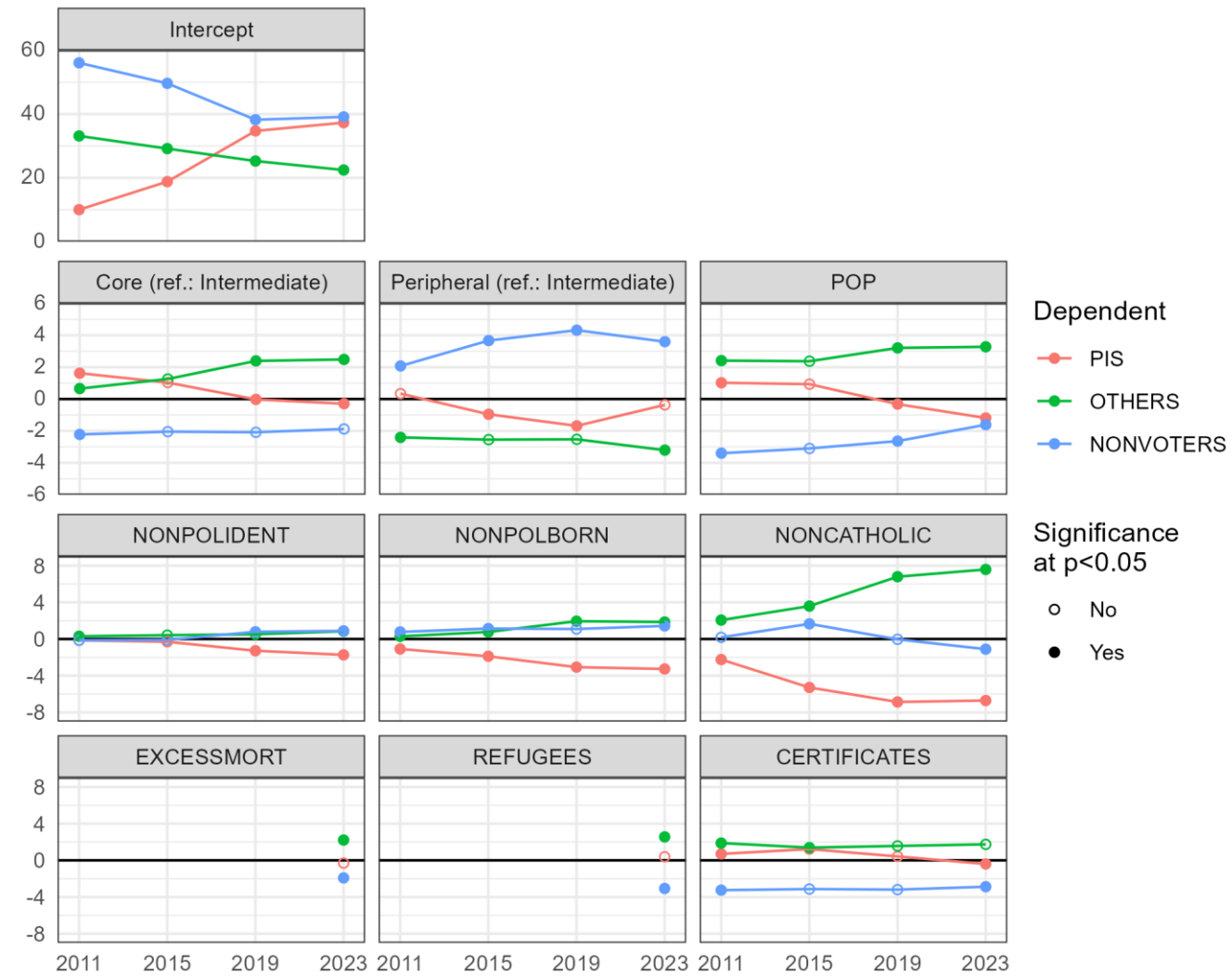
Cultural variables:

- population not declaring Polish identity,
- population born outside of Poland,
- non-members of the Roman Catholic Church.

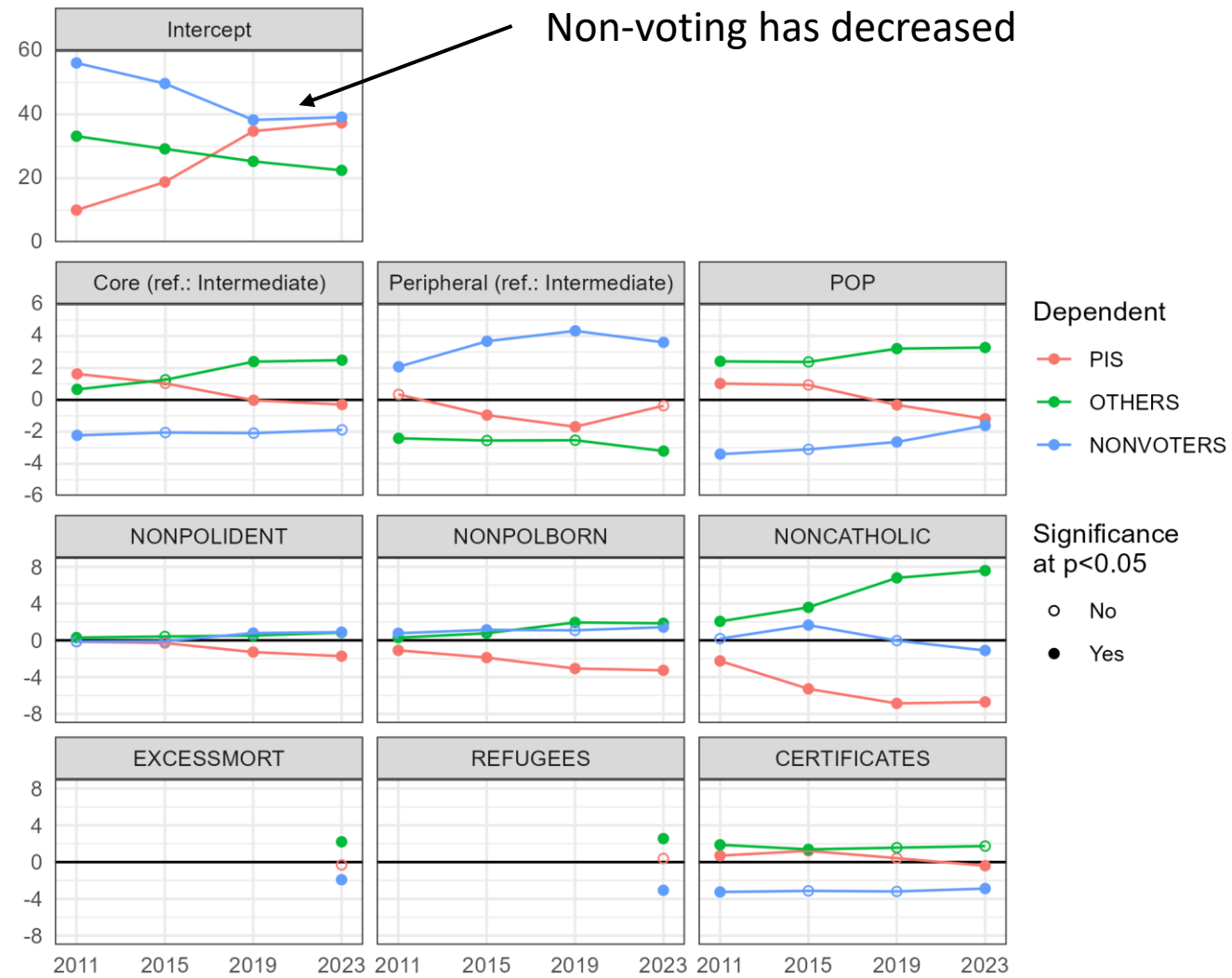
Current issues variables:

- excess mortality during COVID-19 pandemic,
- number of Ukrainian refugees

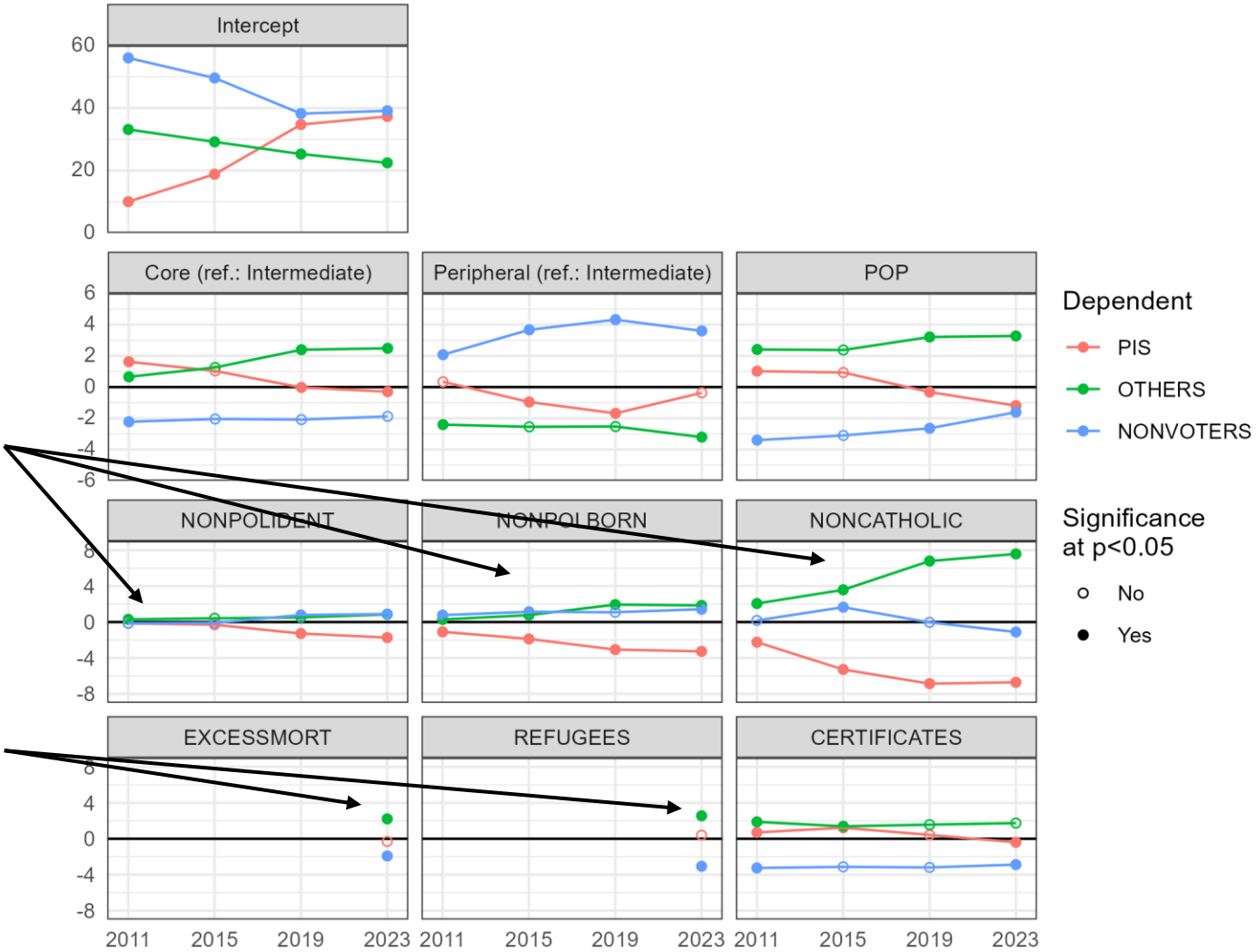
Results of the models



Results of the models



Results of the models



Increasing cultural-geographic divergence

Anti-incumbent tendencies in areas most affected by the pandemic and the effects of war In Ukraine

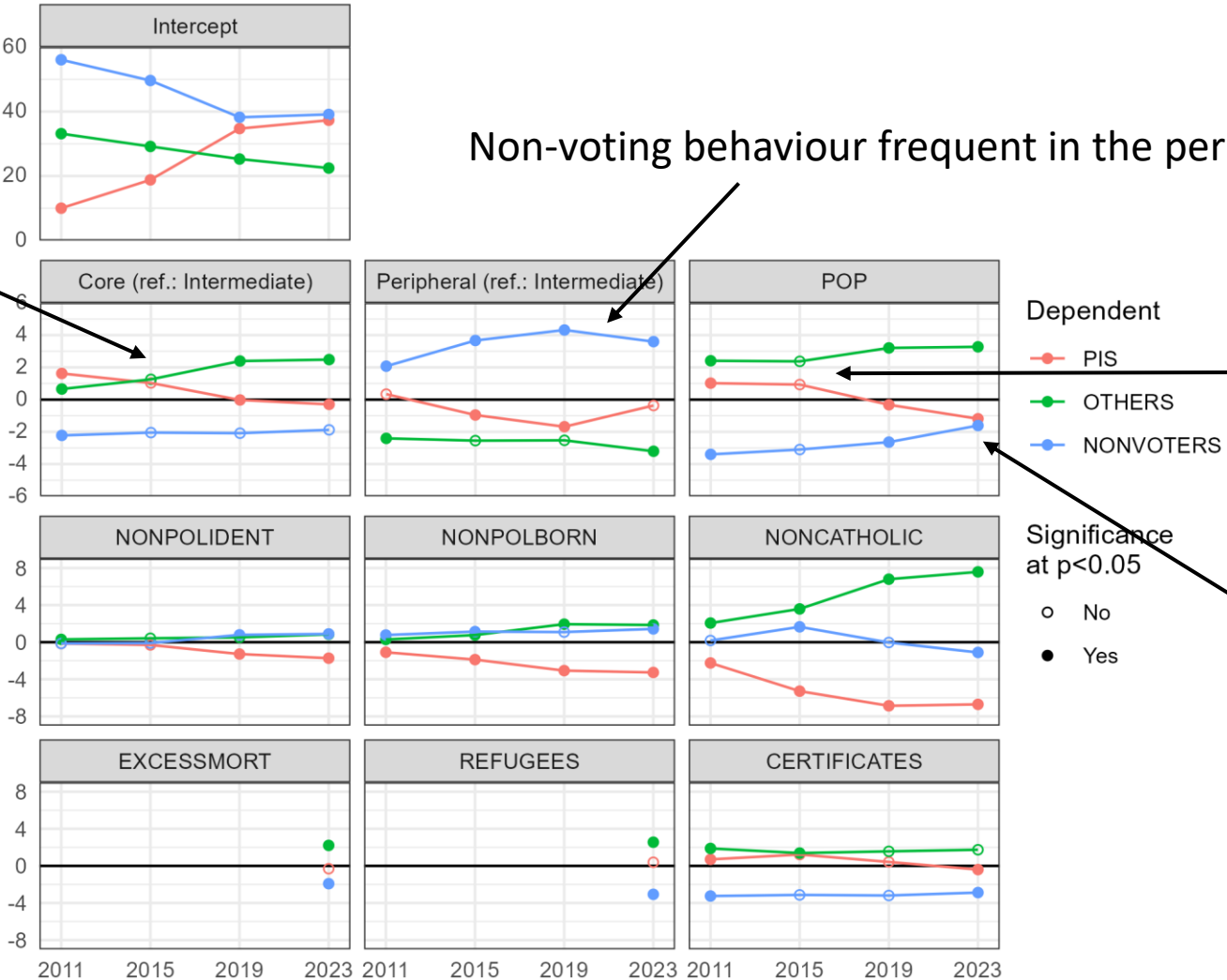
Results of the models

Increasing opposition to PiS
And preference for other
Parties in core areas

Non-voting behaviour frequent in the peripheries

Strengthening correlation
between population
and political choices
(negative for PiS,
positive for other parties)

Weakening negative
correlation
between population
and non-voting



Conclusions

- Right-wing populism has garnered strong support in Polish peripheral and intermediate areas – PiS's victories in 2015 and 2019 were largely driven by the „revenge of places that do not matter”.
- Historically, peripheral population tended not to participate in elections. PiS has managed to mobilise them to vote.
- Support for PiS in peripheral and intermediate regions has not been dented by eight years in power.
- PiS electoral loss in 2023 is the result of a mobilisation of the voters in core areas – a „counter-revenge of places that matter” – **political polarisation across the core-periphery spectrum increases over time.**

Study limitations

- Socio-economic and historic-cultural factors are intertwined. The characteristics of cores and peripheries in Poland have been moulded through historical processes.
- The study used PiS as the epitome of right-wing populism and the rest of the Polish political scene. This perspective flattens the political landscape, while anti-PiS opposition, including the current ruling coalition, is ideologically diverse.
- Populist, Eurosceptic and right-wing parties exist beyond PiS (e.g., *Konfederacja*) and have different geographies of support.

Implications

- **Increasing political polarisation poses a significant threat to political stability, exacerbating the deep socio-economic divides between cores and peripheries.**
- It is important to leverage voters' mobilisation to bridge the gap between core and peripheral areas, addressing geographical inequalities and promoting social and spatial justice.
- Inequalities are not exclusively financial but are often more critically about unmet expectations and lack of opportunities. Place-based interventions should be tailored to the diverse characteristics of territorial capital that shape the possibilities for inhabitants of different areas.

Thank you for your attention.



<https://tiperico.web.amu.edu.pl/en/>

Adamiak C., Rodríguez-Pose A., Churski P., Dubownik A., Pietrzykowski M., Szyda B., Rosik P., 2024. **PLACES THAT MATTER AND PLACES THAT DON'T: TERRITORIAL REVENGE AND COUNTER-REVENGE IN POLAND.** 02/2014 - Working Paper of TIPERICO Project. <https://tiperico.web.amu.edu.pl/en/publications/84-working-paper-02-2024-political-choices-of-the-polish-peripheries>.