Party Competition, Issue Ownership, and Agenda Setting in the 2019 Swiss National Elections

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Motivation and research question

Election campaign shaped by two issues: environment and (to some extent) gender.

In this context, how is agenda setting linked to party competition and issue ownership?
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- In this context, how is agenda setting linked to party competition and issue ownership?
Focus on four issues (MIP, candidate survey)

- Environment
  - Greens: 75%
  - GLP: 50%
  - SP: 25%
  - CVP: 10%
  - FDP: 5%
  - SVP: 0%

- Gender
  - Greens: 100%
  - SP: 75%
  - GLP: 50%
  - CVP: 25%
  - SVP: 10%
  - FDP: 5%

- Europe
  - SVP: 75%
  - FDP: 50%
  - CVP: 25%
  - GLP: 10%
  - SP: 5%
  - Greens: 0%

- Immigration
  - SVP: 100%
  - SP: 75%
  - CVP: 50%
  - FDP: 25%
  - GLP: 10%
  - Greens: 0%
Expectations

1. Agenda setting: Parties that are issue-owners are more successful at shaping the media agenda on this issue, compared to those that do not own the issue.

2. Party competition: Parties take up issues central to the election campaign that are owned by other parties, while they avoid more marginal issues that they do not own.
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Data

June-October 2019

59,888 Tweets (party accounts, without retweets)

576,936 articles (80 newspapers)

Selects survey (panel and candidates)
Data

- June-October 2019

5,888 Tweets (party accounts, without retweets)
576,936 articles (80 newspapers)
Selects survey (panel and candidates)
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Methods
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- Supervised classification of newspaper articles and tweets
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  - Parties $\rightarrow$ newspapers
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- Supervised classification of newspaper articles and tweets
- Vector-autoregression models: attention to the four issues:
  - Parties → newspapers
  - Parties ↔ parties
Attention responsiveness: Parties -> Newspapers

Percentage points

-2 -1 0 1 2 3 4

SVP
SP
Greens
GLP
FDP
CVP

CVP
FDP
GLP
Greens
SP
SVP

Percentage points
Environment Gender Europe Immigration

Parties -> Newspapers

Attention responsiveness:

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Effect of the SVP on: Effect of the SVP on:
Effect of the SP on: Effect of the SP on:
Effect of the Green Party on: Effect of the Green Party on:
Effect of the GLP on: Effect of the GLP on:
Effect of the FDP on: Effect of the FDP on:
Effect of the CVP on: Effect of the CVP on:

Percentage points

Environment Gender Europe Immigration
Conclusion

Neither agenda setting nor party competition were clearly linked to issue ownership. Very high salience of the environment issue during the election campaign was largely exogenous to party competition.
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- Very high salience of the environment issue during the election campaign was largely exogenous to party competition