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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Focus on four issues (MIP, candidate survey)

- Environment
- Gender
- Europe
- Immigration

Party
- Greens
- GLP
- SP
- CVP
- FDP
- SVP

Share of Candidates

- Environment
- Gender
- Europe
- Immigration

Legend:
- Green: Environment
- Pink: Gender
- Blue: Europe
- Gray: Immigration
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)
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- Vector-autoregression models: attention to the four issues
  - Parties → newspapers
  - Parties ←→ parties
Attention responsiveness:
Parties -> Newspapers

Percentage points
Environment Gender Europe Immigration

Parties
SVP
SP
Greens
GLP
FDP
CVP

-2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4
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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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