Seeking Votes or Policies? Party Issue Emphasis During Direct Democratic Campaigns.

Maxime Walder[*]

March 2021

Abstract

How do parties' competing goals influence their issue emphasis? The literature on issue competition finds strong evidence that parties' issue emphasis is influenced by the electorates' issue preferences. However, parties have different underlying goals. As vote seekers, parties have incentives to communicate on issues that are important for their electorate. However, as policy seekers, parties aim to communicate on issues that are important for them to shape the public's view of the problem. This paper takes advantage of the Swiss context to see whether parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns follows more vote-seeking or policy-seeking incentives. In this context, parties are cross-pressured between these two goals. They may use campaigns to reinforce the link with their electorate by emphasizing proposals that align with their voters or they may use the campaign to convince voters to share their preferred outcome. In the first case, parties' communications follow party voters' preferences. The latter case implies that parties are more attentive to the preference of the general electorate - the outcome of ballot proposals. By analyzing parties' and politicians' Twitter communication during direct democratic campaigns, this paper shows that parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns follows both vote-seeking and policy seeking strategies. This suggests that depending on the context, parties' issue emphasis could follow different strategies.

[*]Ph.D. Candidate, University of Zurich, maxime.walder@uzh.ch

1 Introduction

How do parties' competing goals influence their issue emphasis? The saliency theory argues that parties focus their attention on issues that they are comparatively more credible (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, & Hansen, 2003). For instance, leftist parties communicate more on welfare state issues, while parties on the right tend to focus on fiscal or economic issues. The issue ownership theory argues that voters elect parties and candidates that they evaluate as competent to handle issues they find important (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; Lachat, 2014; Petitpas & Sciarini, 2018). To a large extent, parties' attention to political issues is driven by the preferences of citizens who gets them elected: the party voters. Indeed, voters elect parties because of their competence on a selective number of issues. Thus, parties have a clear electoral incentive to devote their attention to those issues. In doing so, they try to direct political attention to issues where they hold this advantage. Studies have shown that the preferences of party voters influence parties' issue emphasis during and between elections (Conway, Kenski, & Wang, 2015; Fagan, 2021; Klüver & Sagarzazu, 2016; Klüver & Spoon, 2016). Parties take cues from the voters who elect them and adapt their issue attention to the preference of these voters. To maximize their (re)election chances, parties emphasize issues that align with their voters' preferences and downplay the others. (De Sio & Weber, 2014, 2020).

Political parties have different goals (Harmel & Janda, 1994; Strom, 1990). The literature on parties' issue emphasis stresses that their issue attention is driven by vote-seeking incentives. Indeed, parties' issue attention can be influenced by the preferences of the party voters to maximize their electoral results. However, it is not clear if this attention also relies upon other strategies. The question is whether parties' issue emphasis follows different strategies? This question is relevant because parties can be cross-pressured between different goals. In addition to vote-seeking, parties also aim to influence the policy output of the political system. Parties' issue attention can help them to shape the public's view in their favor. By defending their position in public, they may pressure their competitor to adopt their position on the issue. As policy-seekers, parties have incentives to devote their attention to issues that are important to them to shape the opinion of the electorate towards their policy oriented goals. If parties' issue policy goals do not match their electorates' goals, they have policy incentives to convince the electorate and

vote incentives to turn their attention on other issues. Thus, what strategies do parties use when they are cross-pressured between competing goals? To analyse this question, the paper relies on the Swiss context and, more specifically, parties' issue emphasis on Twitter during direct democratic campaigns.

The Swiss direct democratic context provides an ideal case for analyzing parties' behavior in cross-pressured situations. Indeed, Swiss voters regularly vote on National ballot proposals. In this context, parties have a clear incentive to use policy-seeking communication strategies, as voters rely on parties and political elites to evaluate the consequences of complex political decisions. Studies have shown that voters take cues from political parties to form their opinion on these ballots (Colombo & Kriesi, 2017; De Angelis, Colombo, & Morisi, 2020; Kriesi, 2006; Kriesi et al., 2005; Slothuus & Bisgaard, 2020; see also chapter 1 of the dissertation). Thus, parties can have a substantial impact on the result of ballot proposals, especially on the voting decisions of their electorate. As policy-seeking actors, parties may use direct democratic campaigns to shape the outcome of ballot proposals.

Research on party issue competition shows that parties also have an electoral incentive to communicate on issues in which they hold a comparative advantage. In general, this means that parties' communications will focus more on some issues than others. Nevertheless, this is not always feasible. Indeed, the direct democratic context imposes specific issues on the political agenda. The same is true, in general, for representative democracies. For instance, if the public attention is on a new tax cut, at first, the right will likely defend the economic benefits of the cuts, and the left will attack its effect on income inequality. The public then forms an opinion about the policy, which may be more or less favorable to it. Depending on the public's support of the policy, one side may have an electoral incentive to keep the attention on this policy, and the other may have incentives to turn the conversation toward other policies and issues. Real-world examples of these dynamics are frequently observable. For instance, since the inauguration of Josef R. Biden as the $46^{th}President of the United States, we see the attention of the Democrats shifting to their largely popular 1.9 trillion relief package[1] while Republican focus on the immigration[2] and the cancel culture debate with, among oth$

[1] See for instance: https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/03/10/covid-19-stimulus-package-polls-find-strong-support-relief/6936053002/

[2] See for instance: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-congress-idUSKBN2BG2CL

[3] See for instance: https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/13/politics/gop-cancel-culture-

In short, parties' issue emphasis can follow policy-seeking incentives or vote-seeking incentives. These two types of incentives can be in conflict with one another if parties seek a policy in which they do not hold an electoral advantage. To see how parties behave in these situations, this paper aims to analyze parties' and politicians' tweets during direct-democratic campaigns. Overall, it analyzes the communications of hundreds of parties and politicians' accounts on Twitter over 15 direct democratic ballot proposals. The results indicate that parties' issue emphasis is influenced by both vote-seeking and policy-seeking incentives.

This paper contributes to the literature on parties' issue emphasis. It shows that even when parties can have a substantial impact on policy outcomes, their issue attention follows vote-seeking incentives. However, the results also indicate that when controlling for the support of party-voters' for the party position, parties also behave as policy seekers. This paper also contributes to the literature on party campaigns in direct democracy. Indeed, while many scholars have studied political campaigns in direct democracy (Bernhard, 2012; Kirchgässner & Schulz, 2005; Kriesi, 2012; Strijbis, Arnesen, & Bernhard, 2016), this paper is, to my knowledge, the first to analyze the effect of public opinion polls on parties' communications' in direct-democratic campaigns. Results clearly show that when parties or politicians interact with the public during direct-democratic campaigns, their communications are influenced by their electoral prospect and by the outcome of ballots. In other words, this paper aims to see what strategies parties use in their communications during direct-democratic campaigns, and finds that they use these campaigns to both maximise their election results and shape the outcome of the ballot.

The paper unfolds as follows. The next section presents and discusses the literature on parties' issue emphasis. This includes an investigation into how the research relates to vote-seeking or policy-seeking behaviour in the direct democratic context where parties can influence voters' decisions. Then, it presents the Twitter data, as well as the survey data, and the models used in the analyses of said data. Afterwards, it presents and describes the results and policy seeking incentives. Finally, it discuss the consequences of the results for past and future research on direct democratic campaigns and party competition.

---

analysis/index.html

2 Parties' Issue Emphasis and Direct Democratic Campaigns

Some of the fundamental features of democracies rely upon interactions between the political elite and citizens. Elections are the institutions through which voters may hold politicians accountable. Downs (1957) proposed a spatial model of voting where voters vote for parties that are ideologically close to them. Based on this model, it is argued that when voters change their ideological positions, parties should move in accordance with this shift to stay close to large segments of the electorate and increase their chances of being (re)elected. This dynamic representation implies a responsiveness from political actors (Stimson, MacKuen, & Erikson, 1995). Parties' position may follow positions shifts of voters on policies to maximize their electoral chances. Several authors have studied parties' responsiveness to voters' position shifts (Adams, Clark, Ezrow, & Glasgow, 2004; Adams, Haupt, & Stoll, 2009; Caughey & Warshaw, 2018; Simonovits, Guess, & Nagler, 2019; Steenbergen, Edwards, & De Vries, 2007; see also chapter 2 of the dissertation). However, voters are not necessarily well informed about political matters. For voters to know when to sanction parties, voters need to know precisely how parties and politicians act in parliament. Furthermore, for political issues with high valence, there is no possibility to compete in terms of position, as these positions, which maximizes the chance of election, are the same for different parties (De Sio & Weber, 2014; Stokes, 1963). In these cases, parties' communications can be used to direct the attention to issues where they have a comparative advantage.

In contrast to the literature on parties' responsiveness, the literature on parties' issue competition considers that parties communicate on issues in which they hold a comparative advantage because their are perceived as more competent than their competitors (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003). Researchers have found that parties take cues from their voters to shape their manifesto, their press releases, or even to set their political agendas (Borghetto & Russo, 2018; Klüver, 2020; Klüver & Bäck, 2019; Klüver & Sagarzazu, 2016; Klüver & Spoon, 2016; Spoon, Hobolt, & De Vries, 2014; Spoon & Klüver, 2014; Steenbergen et al., 2007). These studies provide solid empirical evidence that parties' issue emphasis depends on the issue priorities of their electorate. The argument is that they will enjoy an electoral advantage when they take cues from their electorates' issue

preferences and adapt their issue attention accordingly. In doing so, parties prime their voters on issues that are important to them and increase the likelihood that they will vote for them.

Research on parties' issue competition considers how parties compete on political issues. De Sio and Weber (2014) developed the *issue yield* model, which aims to take into account the multidimensionality of party competition. It also relies on vote-seeking incentives, as it argues that parties communicate to reinforce their link with the voters who got them elected, while also trying to attract new voters. This model is very relevant to analyses of party issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns as a vote-seeking behavior. Indeed, if parties seek votes and communicate when they align with the voters who elected them, then they may communicate more on ballots when their voters align with their position on the issue to maximize their electoral chances. However, for a long time, political scientists have considered that parties have different underlying goals, as they seek votes, policies, or political offices (Harmel & Janda, 1994; Strom, 1990). While studies on party issue competition indicate that their issue emphasis is, at least to some extent, a vote-seeking behavior, it is unclear how parties behave if they are cross-pressured between two or more underlying goals. Namely, when their issue emphasis can serve either policy-seeking or vote-seeking goals.

Another way to conceptualize the aim of political communications lies in the literature on political campaigns. It argues that parties' and politicians' communications aim to activate or persuade voters to vote for a certain outcome (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). Studies show that, while campaigns have the power to enlighten voter's preferences, their power to persuade voters is rather limited (Gelman & King, 1993; Kalla & Broockman, 2018). Empirical findings on political campaigns have shown that campaign intensity gets stronger when the results are predictable and the outcome not likely to change. In a majoritarian election, this, for instance, means that parties and politicians will campaign more when the support for candidates is close, as opposed to when one candidate is leading with high margins. In a direct democracy, it means that the communications are more likely to shape the outcome of the ballot when the expected results are close to 50% of support. Research on both electoral and direct democratic campaigns has shown that campaign intensity and campaign spending increase with the uncertainty of the election (Bernhard, 2012; Gelman & King, 1993; Kriesi, 2012; Nai,

2013; Strijbis et al., 2016). However, for parties, a key difference between these two types of campaigns is the outcome. Indeed, while in elections, the clear goal is to be elected, in direct democracy, the outcome is the adoption or rejection of a policy. Hence, in direct democracy, parties and politicians can use the campaign to mobilize voters and shape the outcome in their favor or follow the preferences of their electorate to reinforce their ties and attract potential new voters. Therefore, it is not clear if parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns follows vote-seeking or policy-seeking incentives. As highlighted in the introduction, this paper argues that parties' communications in direct-democratic campaigns can either serve policy-seeking or vote-seeking goals.

Overall, parties' issue emphasis during direct democratic campaigns may proceed in two different directions. First, parties' communications in direct democracy may aim to shape the outcome of the ballot in their favor. In this context, the interactions between parties and public opinion can have a real impact on a policy outcome. Studies on direct democratic decision-making, as well as partisan cues, find that voters' take cues from the position of parties to form an opinion on an issue (Arceneaux, 2008; Lupia, 1994; Slothuus & Bisgaard, 2020). In Switzerland, in particular, the use of party cues is a well-documented phenomenon (Colombo & Kriesi, 2017; Kriesi, 2006; Kriesi et al., 2005). This means that parties can have a real impact on policy by communicating their position during direct-democratic campaigns. If parties aim to shape the policy outcome, they may be able to have a substantial influence on the outcome of ballot proposals and, thus, on the adoption or rejection of policies.

Second, parties' communications to the public in direct democracy can reinforce the link between parties and their electorate, and be used to increase the likelihood of (re)election. The literature on parties' issue emphasis and party responsiveness finds that parties take cues from their voters (Adams et al., 2004, 2009; Caughey & Warshaw, 2018; Klüver, 2020; Klüver & Sagarzazu, 2016; Klüver & Spoon, 2016; Simonovits et al., 2019). Additionally, studies on the issue ownership theory find strong evidence that voters vote for parties they perceive competent on important issues (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; Fagan, 2021; Lachat, 2014; Lanz & Sciarini, 2016; Petitpas & Sciarini, 2018, 2020). In direct democratic campaigns, this means that parties may strengthen their electoral support if they communicate on policies where they align with their electorate. Although parties may still have vote-seeking incentives to communicate on the issue if their *potential*

electorate - voters that could vote for them - aligns with their position, it is very difficult to identify these groups and their positions on ballot proposals. Thus, if parties aim to maximize their electoral chances they may emphasize the issues where their positions align with those of their electorate. This way, parties solidify their electoral base and potentially attract other voters. The alternative would be to communicate their positions to the public when the voters do not align with the party to attract other potential voters. As the position of the potential electorate on ballot proposals and political issues is difficult to estimate, this strategy carries the risk of isolating party voters and potential voters. Thus, this paper argues that parties' vote-seeking strategies in direct-democratic campaigns should focus on the alignment with their voters. This way, they can reinforce their ties with their voters by communicating their position on issues where they align with the electorate. In contrast, if voters have an opinion on a proposal that goes against the position of the party, parties may try to avoid electoral backlashes by reminding their electorate of their differences. In other words, if parties consider the position of their electorate on direct democratic ballots, they may be able to tailor their communication to the electorate based on their position for each ballot proposals. In this case, parties' communications in direct-democratic campaigns follow more vote-seeking strategies.

How is it possible to identify vote-seeking and policy-seeking strategies in parties' communication during direct democratic campaigns? In the direct democratic context, the outcome of the vote is the adoption or rejection of a policy. We know from research on party cues that parties can have a real impact on the parties' electorate decision-making (Colombo & Kriesi, 2017; De Angelis et al., 2020; Kriesi, 2006; Kriesi et al., 2005; Slothuus & Bisgaard, 2020; see also chapter 1 of the dissertation). If the outcome of a ballot proposal is uncertain, and parties behave as policy seekers, they have strong incentives to communicate widely on the issue to convince the electorate to vote for their preferred outcome. They have even more incentive to do so if the position of their electorate does not align with their position. Indeed, as parties have the most influence on their electorate, they can potentially have a bigger impact on the outcome and convince more voters to vote in line with their policy-oriented goals when their electorate doesn't align with their position. In this case, communicating on the issue can potentially change the voting decision of many party-voters and, thus, change the outcome of the ballot. However, from a vote-seeking perspective, parties have an incentive to communicate on

direct democratic ballots when their electorate aligns with their position. While in this case, parties may not have a strong impact on the outcome, they can use direct democratic campaigns to reinforce the link between them and their electorate. In contrast, if their electorate does not align with their position on the ballot, parties' communications on the issue may reinforce the divergence between them and their electorate. Thus, even if parties are the actors that could have the strongest impact on the outcome of the ballot, from a vote-seeking perspective, they may want to avoid communicating on issues in which they do not align with their electorate.

To summarize, the direct democratic context provides an ideal case to analyze parties' behavior in cross-pressured situations when different goals imply different behavior. This paper argues that parties can use their communications to shape the outcome of ballot proposals or to reinforce their link with their electorate. When actors are interested in the outcome of a vote, campaigns are more intense when the outcome is close to the 50% threshold. When parties behave as policy seekers, they are interested in the outcome - the adoption or rejection of a policy proposal. Thus, it would be advantageous for parties to communicate more when they may influence the outcome - if the expected outcome is close to 50% of support. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Parties' communications in direct democratic campaign increase with the uncertainty of the outcome. (Policy-seeking hypothesis).

However, the literature on issue emphasis has shown that even between elections, parties take cues from their electorate and focus on issues in which they hold a comparative electoral advantage. In the direct democratic context, this means that parties' communications should increase when the position of their electorate and their position align. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Parties' communications in direct-democratic campaigns increase with the alignment of party voters and the party's position (Vote-seeking hypothesis).

In the next section, I present the data and the methods used for the analyses. Then, I present the results of the analyses that tests the two hypotheses. Lastly, I'll discuss the results and their implications for future research.

3   Data and Methods

The previous section argues that parties' issue emphasis can follow vote-seeking or policy-seeking strategies. To test the two related hypotheses, the paper relies on parties' and politicians' Twitter communications during direct-democratic campaigns. Studies have documented that Twitter is a first-choice source of communication for political actors (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013; Conway et al., 2015; Giger, Bailer, Sutter, & Turner-Zwinkels, 2020; Kelm, 2020; Wells et al., 2020). They use it to communicate about politics and personal matters. In Switzerland, Twitter is not widely used by politicians, although there is a growing interest in the social media platform.

Twitter and social media platforms, in general, change the way political scientists study parties' and politicians' communications. Indeed, while many very interesting studies have used party press releases, media coverage, party manifesto, or campaign spending, communications on social media are not demanding in time or resources in contrast to other forms of communications such as press releases and interviews. Furthermore, parties and politicians can decide themselves - or with the collaboration of limited number of people - to communicate messages to voters, which is not the case when we consider the traditional media coverage of political campaigns. Twitter is an ideal tool for analyzing how politicians and parties adapt their communications to new information display in public opinion polls in the short term. Indeed, the traditional communication paths mentioned above, take time to plan, resources to allocate, or can even be independent of the party's or politician's willingness to communicate. For instance, media coverage depends on journalists, who decide which issue and which politician or parties to interview. In this sense, parties' and politicians' communications on Twitter, and in other social platforms in general, are ideal to study how parties' communications are influenced by voters in a short time window.

Overall, this paper relies on three different data sources. First, I used data from the Digital Democracy Lab which collects Twitter data on Swiss parties and politicians. This dataset contains tweets from the second part of 2018 until the end of 2020. I collected more than 2 million tweets in this time frame. From this data, I selected tweets from users identified as politicians and parties, and, for each of the six voting days analyzed in the paper, I selected a time frame of eight weeks before the vote. This made it possible to

identify the Twitter communications of hundreds of parties and politicians on 15 ballot proposals.

Second, I collected the results of surveys conducted and published during the direct-democratic ballots. These public opinion polls were conducted by LeeWas and Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung (GfS), two companies that specialized in political surveys. The surveys were published in the major Swiss newspaper and on state television in all the different language regions[4]. Overall, LeeWas conducted three of these surveys and GfS conducted two. Except in one case, the last survey waves of GFS and LeeWas were published on the same day, so they were not distinguishable in time. Thus, this made it possible to analyze parties' and politicians' communications on 15 ballot proposals at four or five different time points.

In the surveys, two types of information are relevant for the present study. First, for the policy-seeking hypothesis, data on the support and the opposition of each proposal by the entire electorate was collected. Second, the support of ballots by the electorate of the different parties was also collected[5]. These two pieces of information make it possible to test the two hypotheses. Parties' issue emphasis can aim to influence the policy outcome of the vote (Policy-seeking hypothesis). In this case, parties' issue emphasis should be higher when the entire electorate's support for proposal is close to 50% since their communications may then have a substantial impact on the outcome of the ballot. Parties may also communicate more on issues based on the potential electoral benefits it may generate. In this case, parties should communicate more on proposals when they align more their position on the ballot with the position of their voters. Thus, if parties seek policies, it is expected that their issue emphasis increase when results are close to 50%, and if parties seek votes *Policy-Seeking Hypothesis*, it is expected that they emphasize more proposals when they align their position on the ballot with the position of the parts of the electorate that vote for them *Vote-Seeking Hypothesis*. Figure A2 in the appendix displays the support of the Swiss population and party voters for the 15 ballots in the different surveys. It shows that while the support of different voters for proposal stays

---

[4]See LeeWas.ch and GfS.ch for more information on the surveys

[5]In the time of the study, the two companies collected information on vote support by the party for the Greens, the Socialists, the Green Liberals, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, and the Conservatives, except for the 2018 ballot where GfS did not collect information on Green Liberal voters but was present in all other cases. Thus, this paper focuses on these six parties.

relatively constant between the different survey waves, there is some variation that may influence parties' issue attention.

Third, I relied on the Swissvotes (Swissvotes, 2021) dataset, which collects every party's vote recommendations for ballot proposals. This makes it possible to identify the position of parties on ballot proposals and, therefore, to test the vote-seeking hypothesis. Indeed, if parties oppose the ballot, they will align more with their electorate if it opposes the ballot as well. In the opposite case, if parties support a ballot proposal, their electorate will align with them when they strongly support the proposal.

Parties may also have incentives to take cues from voters other than those in their electorate and adapt their communication based on the alignment of their potential electorate. Indeed, to maximize their electoral chances, parties should try to keep the voters who elected them and attract new voters. Nevertheless, parties do not have many incentives to emphasize issues if they do not align with their electorate, even if these positions align with the potential electorate. If parties emphasize issues where they align with the potential electorate but not with their electorate in the first place, they risk losing parts of their electorate without necessarily attracting new voters. Furthermore, parties do not know the position of their potential voters. Thus, although parties may try to attract new voters by emphasizing certain issues, the risk to do so without aligning with their electorate in the first place is a risky vote-seeking strategy. Thus, this paper argues that parties' issue emphasis as a vote-seeking strategy depends first and foremost on the alignment between parties and their voters.

To operationalize the variables, I first identified tweets that concerned specific proposals. To do so, classification words were chosen based on keywords from titles, short-names, or acronyms used to address specific proposals. Then, attention was devoted to the keywords in context to identify potential mismatches or parallel framing[6]. At the end of this process, dictionaries were created for each ballot proposal and the tweets were classified based on the word logic. Table A1 in the appendix presents the word logic

---

[6]For instance, in the french-speaking part of Switzerland, at the same time the Swiss population voted for the Weapon act, France was selling weapons to Saudi Arabia. Thus, the keyword "arme" (weapon in french) was not sufficient to identify the tweets that were related to the proposal. In this case, I also flagged words as "arabie" or "cargo" to include tweets that contained the word "arme" if they did not contain the word "arabie" or "cargo"

chosen to classify tweets on each proposal.

Afterwards, a dataset for each user-ballot proposal was created with 56 observations, one for each day before the six voting days. Then, the dependent variable was created and coded as 1 if the user tweeted about the proposal at least one time in a given day, and 0 otherwise. This dataset was merged with the data from the public opinion poll results from direct-democratic campaigns based on the party of the user, the publication date of the survey results, and the ballot proposal at stake. Finally, the data were aggregated to the user-project-survey wave level and the dependent variable was operationalized as the ratio of tweets on a project on a given day between survey waves by a specific user. It take a minimal value of 0 if the users did not mention the project, and a value of 1 if they mentioned the ballot proposals everyday.

Mentions of issues concerned with ballot proposals varied widely between users. Once the dependent variable was created, all the users that did not mention any ballot in any tweet during the whole time period were excluded. This way, the analyses only contained parties and politicians that mentioned any of the 15 ballot proposals under study at least once. At the end of the process, the sample contained 43,435 observations, of which 34,895 are modelled because of the lag dependent variable. Of these 43,435 observations, more than 88% were coded as 0, and the average ratio of days parties and politicians mentioned ballot proposals was slightly over 1%, which has to be considered when analysing the results. Figure A2 shows histograms for the distribution of the dependent variable.

The independent variables include the expected closeness of the outcome, the party voters' support for a proposal, and the party's position on a proposal. Additionally, the analyses include fixed effects for the user, ballot proposals, and survey waves. The Twitter users ID is indicated in the dataset of the Digital Democracy Lab. The survey waves, as well as the ballot proposals, are defined in the datasets with the survey results, as well as with the classification of tweets. The expected closeness is coded as the absolute value of the difference between the support of the population (in percentage) minus fifty. This creates a variable that tells us the distance to the 50% threshold. This variable has a theoretical minimum and of zero and maximum of 50. The party's electorate position was operationalized with the difference between party voters' support for the proposal and the population support for the proposal. This variable can take values

from -100 to 100 theoretically, but was limited between -41 and 53 in our dataset. This represents the distance between the parties' electorate and the overall population. The variable on party-voters' alignment was operationalized with this difference to take into account the wide variety of support for different ballot proposals. Indeed, an absolute support of party voters of 40% does not mean the same thing if the support of the general population is 60% or 20%. By taking the difference between the general support and the support of party voters, we took the variety of support for ballot proposals into account in the operationalization of the variable. Finally, the position of the party is coded as a categorical variable in two categories, either yes or no. However, in one case, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) gave a free recommendation. As it is between positions, we exclude this case from our analysis.

The analyses consist of an Ordianl Least Square (OLS) regression with fixed effect for the Twitter users, the ballot proposals, and the survey waves. They also includes a lag dependent variable as a control to increase the causal identification for the effect of the independent terms. In a second model I included the survey waves as a time trend instead of time fixed effects. The models used in the paper can be written as:

$$Y_{upw} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_{upw-1} + \beta_n X_{upw-1} + User_u + Proposal_p + Wave_w + \epsilon_{upw}$$

where Y_{upw} is the dependent variable, Y_{upw-1} is the lag dependent variable, u is the user, p the proposal, and w the survey wave. $\beta_n X_{upw-1}$ represents the effect of the independent variables. In total, four models were conducted and compared. First, models one and two present the direct effect of the closeness of the outcome on party issue emphasis. Models three and four show the interaction effect of party voters' support for the ballot and party position on the proposal on party issue emphasis. Then, models five and six compute both the interaction effect of models three and four and the direct effect of the expected closeness of models one and two. Finally, models seven and eight show the three way interaction between party voters' support, party position, and closeness of the outcome of proposals on the issue emphasis of the proposal. Models with odd numbers include time fixed effect and models with even numbers include a time trend for the survey waves.

In the next section, I present the results of the three regression models, their consequences for the hypotheses, and the role of parties in direct-democratic campaigns.

4   Results

The results of the regressions are presented in Table 1. Overall, eight models are presented. Models one and two show the effect of the closeness of the outcome - the distance to the 50% threshold. Models three and four show the effect of the interaction between party voters' support for ballots and the position of the party on the proposal. Models five and six show the results from when both the closeness of the outcome and the interaction were included. Finally, models seven and eight show the results of the three-way interaction between the closeness of the outcome, the party voters' support for the ballot, and the party position on the proposal. Each model with an odd number includes party, proposals and survey wave fixed effect, and the models with even numbers replace the survey wave fixed effects with a trend.

Models one and two show the direct effect of the closeness of the outcome on parties' issue emphasis. The effect is positive and significant. The independent variable, the closeness of the outcome, is the absolute distance to 50% of support. According to this model, parties seem to communicate more when the outcome is well delimited. This result not only goes against the hypothesis on policy-seeking communication strategy, but also goes against what is observed in election campaigns or direct-democratic campaigns with campaign ads by adverse camps (Bernhard, 2012; Gelman & King, 1993; Kriesi, 2012; Nai, 2013; Strijbis et al., 2016). Indeed, the models show that parties communicate more on ballot proposals when the expected outcome of the proposal is close to the 50% threshold. This means that parties communicate less when they are more likely to influence the policy output. This seems to invalidate the policy-seeking hypothesis, or at least suggests that parties do not use policy-seeking communication strategies as primary strategies during direct-democratic campaigns.

Table 1: Regression results

|	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
					Issue Emphasis t_0			
Issue Emphasis t_{-1}	0.466***	0.465***	0.461***	0.460***	0.460***	0.459***	0.459***	0.458***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Closeness of the Outcome	0.0001***	0.0002***			−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.001***	−0.001***
	(0.00004)	(0.00004)			(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Party voters' support			0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.0002	0.0002
			(0.00005)	(0.00005)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Party position			0.004***	0.004***	0.003**	0.003**	−0.002	−0.002
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Closeness x Party voters' support							0.00002***	0.00002***
							(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Closeness x Party position							0.0004**	0.0004**
							(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Party voters' support x Party position			−0.001***	−0.001***	−0.001***	−0.001***	−0.0004**	−0.0004**
			(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Closeness x Party voters' support x Party position							−0.00002***	−0.00002***
							(0.00001)	(0.00001)
Constant	0.012	0.008	0.006	0.002	0.013	0.009	0.014	0.010
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
User FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Survey Wave FE	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Survey Wave trend	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	34,895	34,895	34,895	34,895	34,895	34,895	34,895	34,895
R^2	0.349	0.350	0.352	0.353	0.352	0.353	0.353	0.354
Adjusted R^2	0.336	0.336	0.338	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.340

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Models five and six display the same effect, with the control for the interaction between the support of party voters and the party position. We see that the regression coefficient goes in the opposite direction. This suggests that, when controlling for parties' alignment with their electorate, parties' issue emphasis is influenced by the closeness of the outcome. Indeed, models five and six both show that the closeness of the outcome has a negative effect on parties' issue emphasis. This means that parties communicate less on proposals when the expected outcome is fare from the 50% threshold.

Figure 1 plots the direct effect of the closeness of the outcome with and without the control for party voters' alignment. It shows that parties' issue emphasis is influenced by the closeness of the outcome when including controls for party-voters' alignment. This goes in the direction of the *Policy-Seeking hypothesis*. However, it also highlights that without this control, the result goes in the opposite direction. Thus, it seems that parties' issue emphasis is driven by policy-seeking considerations as well as vote-seeking incentives. When testing one effect without the other, researchers may underestimate or even misunderstand the effect voters' have on parties. The figure 1 clearly shows that parties communicate more when the issue is close to the outcome but that this is highlighted only when controlling for parties' electorate support and parties' positions on ballot proposals.

Models three and four show the interaction of the party voters' support for ballots and the party position on those proposals.Models five and six show this interaction with the control for the closeness of the outcome. We see that the effect is consistent and similar in both cases. To interpret the magnitude and the direction of the interaction effect, Figure **??** presents the effect of the interaction between voters' support and party position on parties' communications on direct-democratic issues with and without the control for the expected closeness.

Figure 2 shows that parties' issue emphasis on direct-democratic ballots is driven by the alignment of the party with their electorate. Indeed, both with and without the control for the expected closeness, we see that the effect of party voters' support for proposals has a positive effect on parties' issue emphasis when parties are in favor of the ballot, and a negative effect when they oppose to it. This means that the more parties align with their voters, the more they will communicate on proposals. This seems to confirm the *Vote-Seeking hypothesis*. However, we see that the effect is slightly stronger

16

Figure 1: Effect of the closeness of the outcome on parties' issue emphasis
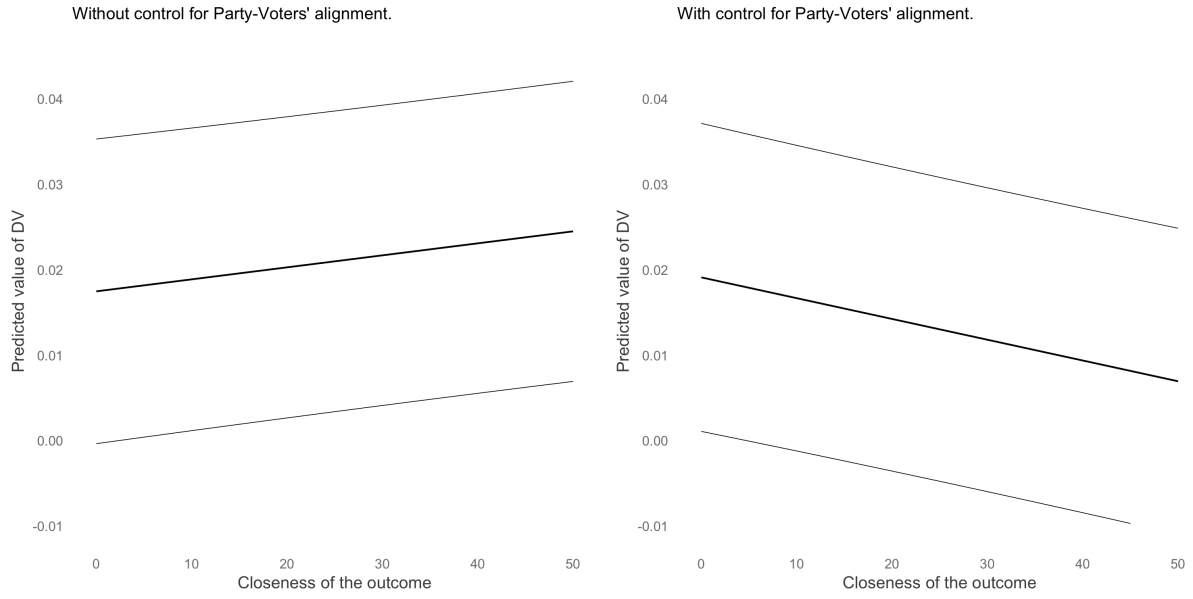
The left side of the figure shows the effect presented in Model 1 and the right side shows the effect in Model 3, without and with control for the interaction between party voters' support and party position.

Figure 2: Interaction effect of party position and party voters' support for ballot proposal on parties' issue emphasis.
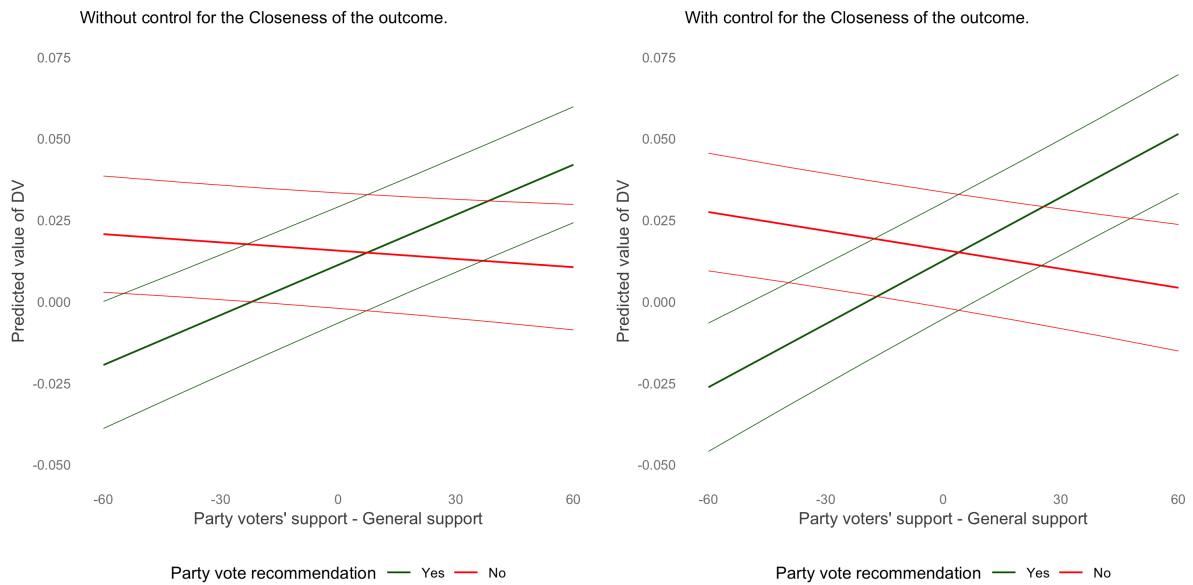
The left side of the figure shows the effect presented in Model 2 and the right side shows the effect in Model 3, with and without control for the closeness of the outcome.

when including controls for the closeness of the outcome. This suggests that parties are not only using these communications as vote or policy seekers, but adopt different

strategies simultaneously. Thus, how does the closeness of the outcome and the alignment with the electorate interact with each other and, in turn, influence parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns?

Models seven and eight display the effects of the three-way interaction between the closeness of the outcome, the party-voters' support, and parties' positions on the parties' issue emphasis during direct-democratic campaigns. Table 1 shows that the interaction between voters' support and parties position on ballots affects parties issue emphasis on proposals. To interpret the results, I plotted the interaction in Figure 3. It shows the effect of the interaction between party voters' support and parties' positions when of the outcome is close to 50% of support - on the left side - and fare from this threshold - on the right side. Figure 3 shows that parties' issue emphasis is more heavily influenced by the support of the party voters when the outcome is close to the 50% threshold. In contrast, when the expected outcome is clear, parties adapt more of their communication to their voters. This means that parties and politicians will communicate more with the public when their voters align with them. However, this is moderated by the closeness of the outcome. If the expected outcome is close to the 50% threshold, parties are less influenced by the position of their electorate on the issue.

Figure 3: Interaction effect of party position, party voters' support and closeness of ballot proposal parties' issue emphasis.
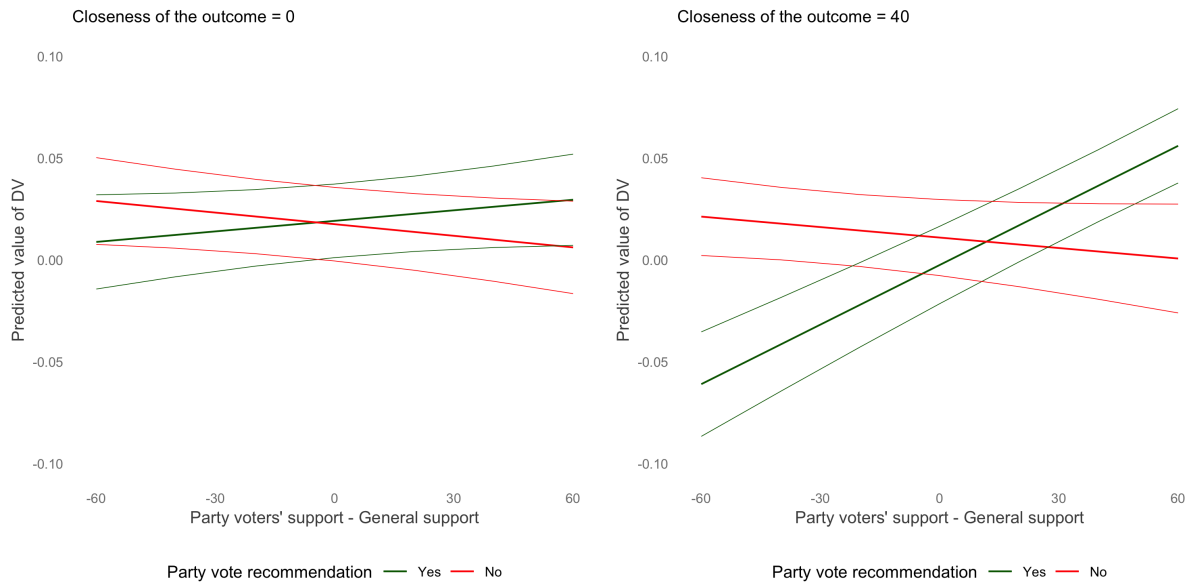

Figure 3 shows that parties are not only vote seekers when they communicate in

18

direct-democratic ballot proposals, but that they also seek policies. Indeed, we see that even if parties' issue emphasis is influenced by the party voters' position on the ballot, this effect is moderated by the closeness of the outcome. Thus, do parties seek votes or policies in their emphasis of issues during direct-democratic campaigns? The answer is both. However, the direct democratic context reinforces parties' incentives to behave as policy-seekers. If parties behave as vote-seekers, I argued they have incentives to communicate on ballot proposals when these communications are projected to have a substantial impact on the vote results. The literature on partisan heuristics shows that parties mainly impact their voters' voting decisions. Thus, parties have more potential impact on the results of ballot proposals when their electorate does not align with their position. In these cases, they may convince a greater amount of voters as they mainly influence their electorate's voting decisions. In the opposite case, if party-voters align their voting decision with the recommendation of their party, the impact of communicating their position will be limited, as their voters are already convinced about their position on the ballot. Thus, the substantial impact of parties' issue emphasis of ballot proposals on the vote result may be lower when party voters align with the party position than when the party does not align with its' electorate. In the latter case, parties can potentially influence more people than in the former. Thus, if parties were more interested in seeking policy, they should communicate more when the issue is close to 50% and their electorate de-aligns with them. In this case, they would maximise the probability that the vote results of ballot proposals go in the preferred direction of the party. The results of models seven and eight show that parties are not only vote-seekers or policy-seekers in their communication, but that these strategies are combined, and the understanding of parties' issue emphasis is linked to both vote-seeking and policy-seeking strategies.

This result has important consequences for the literature on party issue emphasis and the role of parties in direct-democratic campaigns. First, this paper studies how parties' issue emphasis may be influenced by incentives other than vote-seeking incentives. In doing so, it shows that party issue emphasis can also serve policy-seeking strategy. However, the hard case of direct-democracy is specifically studied for the clear incentives parties have to behave as policy seekers, and there is evidence that parties do so after accounting for vote-seeking strategies. This suggests that, in other contexts, identifying other strategies from parties may be difficult, as their incentives as policy-seekers should

be lower than in the direct-democratic context. Additionally, in this context, strong policy-seeking behaviour would have included more communication on issues when the electorate did not align with the party position. In this case, parties may have a more substantive impact on the outcome. While we see that the closeness of the outcome decreases the effect of party voters' alignment on their issue emphasis, it does not cancel it or reverse it. Thus, this indicates that parties policy-seeking behavior may be limited by their vote-seeking incentives.

This paper is the first to analyze parties' communications in direct-democratic campaigns as a dynamic phenomenon. This highlights that parties in direct-democratic campaigns do not try to convince their electorate to vote for their preferred policy outcome. However, they do use direct-democratic campaigns to reinforce the ties with their electorate when they can and to avoid electoral backlashes in other cases. This is central for our understanding of parties' priorities. Indeed, while we know that parties follow different goals when interacting with voters, they seem to be willing to seek elements such as the adoption or rejection of policies other than votes when they are cross-pressured and have clear incentives to adopt a policy-seeking strategy. However, even in the case of direct-democratic campaigns where parties have clear policy seeking incentives, this paper suggests that parties will still largely use vote-seeking strategies.

5   Discussion

This paper studies parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns. It first highlights that previous research mainly consider parties' issue emphasis as a vote-seeking strategy and, subsequently, questions this conceptualization. It takes advantage of the Swiss direct-democratic context where parties have clear policy seeking incentives to emphasize issues and shape the outcome of the ballot towards their policy preferences. Results indicate that parties' issue emphasis in direct-democratic campaigns is influenced by vote-seeking and policy-seeking strategies. This suggests that, while parties behave as vote seekers as demonstrated by other research, their emphasis on issues is also influenced by policy-seeking strategies.

These results have consequences for the study of party issue emphasis and par-

ties' campaign strategies in direct democracies. First, it shows that studies on parties' issue emphasis accurately consider this phenomenon as a vote-seeking strategy. Indeed, even in contexts where parties have clear incentives to behave as policy seekers, this paper shows that they will also behave as vote seekers. However, the results indicate that parties' issue emphasis also follows policy-seeking strategies. We see that, depending on the closeness of the outcome of ballot proposals, parties' issue emphasis is more or less influenced by the party voters' supports of ballots. While the direct democratic context gives clear policy seeking incentives to parties, they may also follow different strategies in the emphasis of issues outside of this context.

While studies have shown that parties' issue emphasis follows party voters' preferences on the issues (Borghetto & Russo, 2018; Klüver, 2020; Klüver & Bäck, 2019; Klüver & Sagarzazu, 2016; Klüver & Spoon, 2016; Spoon et al., 2014; Spoon & Klüver, 2014; Steenbergen et al., 2007), this paper also finds that they may be following other strategies. Even if the direct-democratic context increases the policy seeking incentives of parties, outside of this context, they may also be willing to behave as vote seekers on some issues more so than on others. Indeed, as we know that parties can shape the public opinion on issues, they may have different incentives to behave as vote or policy seekers on different issues. For instance, it may be unlikely that some party-issue combinations, such as the green and the environment or the socialists and social welfare policies, are influenced by voters' preferences.

While, in general, party issue emphasis is a vote-seeking strategy, the interaction between parties and issues may show a different picture. The fact that, in direct-democratic campaigns, it is both a vote-seeking and a policy-seeking strategy means that it is likely that, outside of this context, parties will emphasize issues based on vote-seeking considerations. However, parties may aim for different goals depending on the issue at stake. In some cases, parties may take cues from voters. In other cases, parties may want to provide cues to voters to shape the opinion of the general electorate. Future research may be interested in investigating different incentive structures for parties to take cues from voters or give cues to voters. This will help us to further understand the interaction between party elites and voters, as well as how these relationships affect the quality of democracies. A better understanding of when parties do or do not use vote-seeking and policy-seeking strategies is of the utmost importance.

These results show that parties' communications on ballot proposals during direct-democratic campaigns are also influenced by each party's willingness to reinforce their ties with their electorate, based on more than the adoption of their preferred outcome. Studies on partisan heuristics, as well as studies on campaign intensity, show that voters are more informed when they are provided with clear cues (Colombo & Kriesi, 2017; Lupia, 1994; Slothuus & Bisgaard, 2020) and when political campaigns are more intense (Bernhard, 2012; Gelman & King, 1993; Kriesi, 2012; Nai, 2013; Strijbis et al., 2016). The results of the present study suggest that voters' awareness of direct-democratic ballots might suffer from not aligning with parties' positions. In other words, this study suggests that in cases where party voters do not align with the party position, parties will communicate less and, as a result, voters will be provided with fewer cues and less campaign material to increase their awareness on proposals. Therefore, party issue emphasis in direct democracy may entail the awareness of party voters. However, the first paper of this dissertation also show that party voters do not only take cues from their preferred party, but also from opposition parties, which may diminish the potential issue of party issue emphasis in direct democracy. Nevertheless, it is clear that further research is required to unpack the phenomenon of parties' issue emphasis in direct democracy to study its potential effects on voters' awareness of ballot proposals.

Overall, this research sheds light on the relationship between parties and voters both in general and in the specific direct-democratic context. Although it is difficult to know to what extent these results are influenced by the Swiss context or by the ballot proposal studied, none of the theories are specific to Swiss politics. While the direct democratic context is surely an ideal case to study party issue emphasis in cross-pressured situations, I think that the results presented in this study should be of interest for general research on party issue competition and, more specifically, party issue emphasis. Indeed, while the key result demonstrates that party issue emphasis depends on vote-seeking incentives, the policy-seeking effect identified in this paper may be interesting to study in other contexts, as parties can have policy-seeking incentives to cue the electorate on issues outside of the direct democratic context.

References

Adams, J., Clark, M., Ezrow, L., & Glasgow, G. (2004). Understanding change and stability in party ideologies: do parties respond to public opinion or to past election results? *British Journal of Political Science*, *34*(4), 589–610.

Adams, J., Haupt, A. B., & Stoll, H. (2009). What moves parties? the role of public opinion and global economic conditions in western europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(5), 611–639.

Arceneaux, K. (2008). Can partisan cues diminish democratic accountability? *Political Behavior*, *30*(2), 139–60.

Ausserhofer, J., & Maireder, A. (2013). National politics on twitter: Structures and topics of a networked public sphere. *Information, communication & society*, *16*(3), 291–314.

Bélanger, É., & Meguid, B. M. (2008). Issue salience, issue ownership, and issue-based vote choice. *Electoral Studies*, *27*(3), 477–491.

Bernhard, L. (2012). *Campaign strategy in direct democracy*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Borghetto, E., & Russo, F. (2018). From agenda setters to agenda takers? the determinants of party issue attention in times of crisis. *Party Politics*, *24*(1), 65–77.

Caughey, D., & Warshaw, C. (2018). Policy preferences and policy change: Dynamic responsiveness in the american states, 1936–2014. *American Political Science Review*, *112*(2).

Colombo, C., & Kriesi, H. (2017). Party, policy–or both? partisan-biased processing of policy arguments in direct democracy. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *27*(3), 235–253.

Conway, B. A., Kenski, K., & Wang, D. (2015). The rise of twitter in the political campaign: Searching for intermedia agenda-setting effects in the presidential primary. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *20*(4), 363–380.

De Angelis, A., Colombo, C., & Morisi, D. (2020). Taking cues from the government: heuristic versus systematic processing in a constitutional referendum. *West European Politics*, *43*(4), 845–868.

De Sio, L., & Weber, T. (2014). Issue yield: A model of party strategy in multidimensional space. *American Political Science Review*, *108*(4), 870–885.

De Sio, L., & Weber, T. (2020). Issue yield, campaign communication, and electoral performance: a six-country comparative analysis. *West European Politics*, *43*(3), 720–745.

Downs, A. (1957). An economic theory of political action in a democracy. *Journal of political economy*, *65*(2), 135–150.

Fagan, E. (2021). Issue ownership and the priorities of party elites in the united states, 2004–2016. *Party Politics*, *27*(1), 149–160.

Gelman, A., & King, G. (1993). Why are american presidential election campaign polls so variable when votes are so predictable? *British Journal of Political Science*, *23*(4), 409–451.

Giger, N., Bailer, S., Sutter, A., & Turner-Zwinkels, T. (2020). Policy or person? what voters want from their representatives on twitter. *Manuscript in preparation*.

Harmel, R., & Janda, K. (1994). An integrated theory of party goals and party change. *Journal of theoretical politics*, *6*(3), 259–287.

Kalla, J. L., & Broockman, D. E. (2018). The minimal persuasive effects of campaign contact in general elections: Evidence from 49 field experiments. *American Political Science Review*, *112*(1), 148–166.

Kelm, O. (2020). Why do politicians use facebook and twitter the way they do? the influence of perceived audience expectations. *SCM Studies in Communication and Media*, *9*(1), 8–34.

Kirchgässner, G., & Schulz, T. (2005). Expected closeness or mobilisation: why do voters go to the polls?: Empirical results for switzerland, 1981-1999. *CESifo Working Paper*.

Klüver, H. (2020). Setting the party agenda: interest groups, voters and issue attention. *British Journal of Political Science*, *50*(3), 979–1000.

Klüver, H., & Bäck, H. (2019). Coalition agreements, issue attention, and cabinet governance. *Comparative Political Studies*, *52*(13-14), 1995–2031.

Klüver, H., & Sagarzazu, I. (2016). Setting the agenda or responding to voters? political parties, voters and issue attention. *West European Politics*, *39*(2), 380–398.

Klüver, H., & Spoon, J.-J. (2016). Who responds? voters, parties and issue attention. *British Journal of Political Science*, *46*(3), 633–654.

Kriesi, H. (2006). Role of the political elite in swiss direct-democratic votes. *Party Politics*, *12*(5), 599–622.

Kriesi, H. (2012). *Political communication in direct democratic campaigns: Enlightening or manipulating?* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kriesi, H., et al. (2005). *Direct democratic choice: The swiss experience.* Plymouth, KY: Lexington Books.

Lachat, R. (2014). Issue ownership and the vote: The effects of associative and competence ownership on issue voting. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *20*(4), 727–740.

Lanz, S., & Sciarini, P. (2016). The short-time dynamics of issue ownership and its impact on the vote. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *26*(2), 212–231.

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lupia, A. (1994). Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in california insurance reform elections. *American Political Science Review*, *88*(1), 63–76.

Nai, A. (2013). What really matters is which camp goes dirty: Differential effects of negative campaigning on turnout during swiss federal ballots. *European Journal of Political Research*, *52*(1), 44–70.

Petitpas, A., & Sciarini, P. (2018). Short-term dynamics in issue ownership and electoral choice formation. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *24*(4), 423–441.

Petitpas, A., & Sciarini, P. (2020). The more the better? cumulative issue ownership and intra-campaign party switching. *Electoral Studies*, *64*, 102118.

Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science*, *40*(3), 825–850.

Petrocik, J. R., Benoit, W. L., & Hansen, G. J. (2003). Issue ownership and presidential campaigning, 1952-2000. *Political Science Quarterly*, *118*(4), 599–626.

Simonovits, G., Guess, A. M., & Nagler, J. (2019). Responsiveness without representation: Evidence from minimum wage laws in us states. *American Journal of Political Science*, *63*(2), 401–410.

Slothuus, R., & Bisgaard, M. (2020). How political parties shape public opinion in the real world. *American Journal of Political Science*. doi: 10.1111/ajps.12550

Spoon, J.-J., Hobolt, S. B., & De Vries, C. E. (2014). Going green: Explaining issue competition on the environment. *European Journal of Political Research*, *53*(2), 363–380.

Spoon, J.-J., & Klüver, H. (2014). Do parties respond? how electoral context influences party responsiveness. *Electoral Studies*, *35*, 48–60.

Steenbergen, M. R., Edwards, E. E., & De Vries, C. E. (2007). Who's cueing whom? mass-elite linkages and the future of european integration. *European Union Politics*, *8*(1), 13–35.

Stimson, J. A., MacKuen, M. B., & Erikson, R. S. (1995). Dynamic representation. *American political science review*, *89*(3), 543–565.

Stokes, D. E. (1963). Spatial models of party competition. *The American Political Science Review*, *57*(2), 368–377.

Strijbis, O., Arnesen, S., & Bernhard, L. (2016). Using prediction market data for measuring the expected closeness in electoral research. *Electoral Studies*, *44*, 144–150.

Strom, K. (1990). A behavioral theory of competitive political parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, *34*(2), 565–598.

Swissvotes. (2021). *Swissvotes – die datenbank der eidgenössischen volksabstimmungen.* Retrieved 07.10.2019, from www.swissvotes.ch

Wells, C., Shah, D., Lukito, J., Pelled, A., Pevehouse, J. C., & Yang, J. (2020). Trump, twitter, and news media responsiveness: A media systems approach. *New Media & Society*, *22*(4), 659–682.

6 Appendix

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the data used in the paper. First, Table A1 displays the word logic for the classification of tweets as well as the number of Twitter users considered in the analyses. Then, Figure A1 shows the support of Swiss population and party voters for different proposals in the different survey waves. Finally, Figure A1 displays the distribution of the dependent variable with and without observation equal to 0.

Table A1: Word logic for tweets classification and number of Users considered in each project

Date	Project shortname (FR)	Word logic german	Word logic french	Number of Users
2018-11-25	Initiative pour les vaches à cornes	"*hornk*"	"*vache*" and "*corn*"	240
2018-11-25	Initiative pour l'autodétermination	"*selbstbestimm*" or "*sbi*" or "*antimens*"	"*autod*" or "*anti-droit*"	240
2018-11-25	Base légale pour la surveillance des assurés	"*versicherung*"	"*surveil*"	240
2019-02-10	Initiative contre le mitage	"*zersiedelung*"	"*mitage*"	519
2019-05-19	Réforme fiscale et financement de l'AVS	("*ahv*" and "*steuer*") or ("*staf*" and !"*staff*")	("*avs*" and "*taxe*") or "*rffa*"	583
2019-05-19	Directive de l'UE sur les armes	"*waffen*"	"*armes*" and !"*cargo*" and !"*arabi*"	583
2020-02-09	Initiative davantage de logements abordables	"*wohnungen*"	"*logement*"	602
2020-02-09	Loi anti discrimination	"*diskrim*"	"*discrim*"	602
2020-09-27	Pour une immigration modérée (initiative de limitation)	"*kündigungs*" or "*begrenzung*" or "*bgi*"	"*immigration*" or "*limita*" or "*résilia*"	635
2020-09-27	Loi sur la chasse	"*jagd*"	"*chasse*"	635
2020-09-27	Déduction fiscale des frais de garde des enfants par des tiers	"*steuerabzüg*" or "*steuerabzug*" or "*berücksichtigung*"	"*fiscal*" or "*déduction*"	635
2020-09-27	Loi sur les allocations pour perte de gain (Congé paternité)	"*vaterschaft*"	"*paternit*"	635
2020-09-27	Acquisition de nouveaux avions de combat	"*flugzeug*"	"*avion*"	635
2020-11-29	Initiative entreprises responsables	"*konzern*" or "*kvi*" or "*kovi*"	("*entreprise*" and "*responsable*") or ("*multinational*" and "*responsable*")	636
2020-11-29	Initiative sur interdiction du financement des producteurs de matériel de guerre	"*kriegsmaterial*" or "*kriegsgesch*"	("*guerre*" and "*commerce*") or ("*guerre*" and "*materiel*")	636

Figure A1: Distribution of the vote, intention of party voters, and the Swiss population for each proposal.
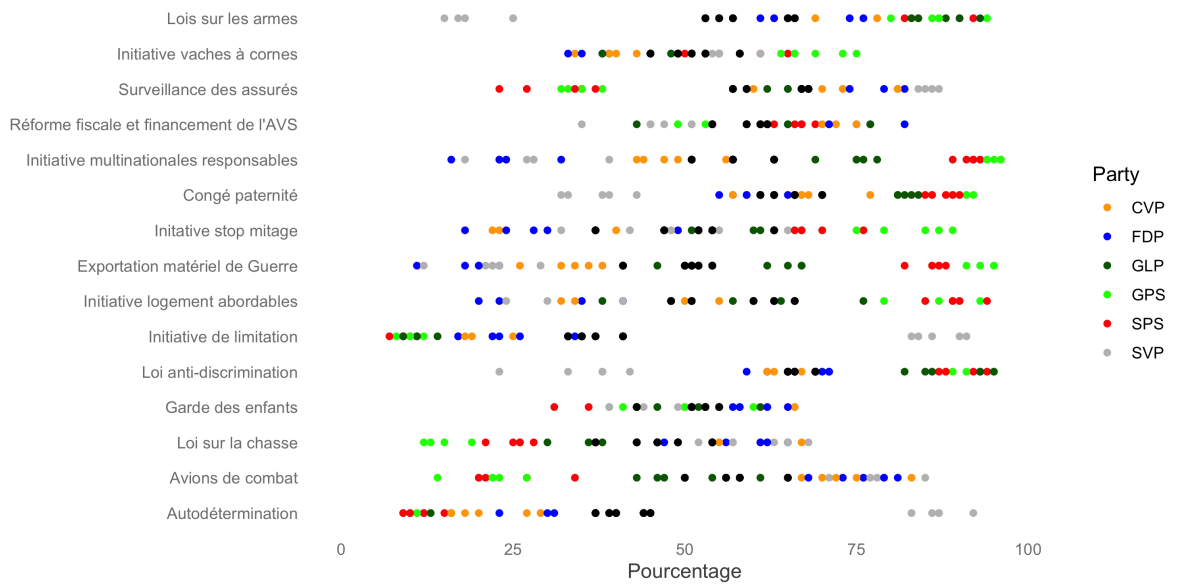
The y axis displays the name of proposals in French. The black dots represent the support by the Swiss population and the coloured dots indicate support by different party-voters. The parties are the Christian Democrats (CVP), the Liberals (FDP), the Green Liberals (GLP), the Greens (GPS), The Socialist (SP) and the Swiss People' Party (SVP). The different dots of the same color represent the four or five different survey waves.

Figure A2: Distribution of the dependent variable with and without the 0 value.

With 0 value

Without 0 value