

# Owning the Agenda

What are political actors emphasizing?

# Recap

Salience: Issue property of importance

Agenda: Actor property of issue importance

*Questions about last Session?*

Today: *Why would political actors change the agenda?*

# Discuss

*What reasons could parties have to emphasize particular issues?*

# What to put on your agenda?

- As a vote-seeking political actors, what issues will I emphasize?
- Issues that get me elected (Vote Seeking)
  - Issues important to my voters?
  - Issues I am perceived as competent on?
  - Issues that signal positions
- Issues that I find important ideologically? (Policy Seeking)

# Issue Choices and Policy-Seeking

- Parties are Policy Seeking entities
- Members share positions on issues important to them
- Shifts are difficult:
  - because of credibility: De Sio / Weber 2016
  - because of intra-party actors: Mayer / Wagner
- Traditions



# Issue Emphasis and Vote-Seeking

- Contrasting sociological theories of voting
- Downs 1953: Voters choose politicians who are close to them in policy ->

## **Spatial Theory of Voting**

- (Some) Voters vote based on positions on important issues (Stimson & Carmines 1980) -> **Issue Voting**
- Parties and Politicians are elected for **competence**. They want to appear competent on political issues

# Issue Ownership

- Parties have reputations on issues (Budge and Farlie 1980, Petrocik 1996)
- They are seen as competent on particular issues, while less so on others
- They “own” issues
  - Labour owns social justice
  - conservative parties own law and order

They choose issues they own mediated by  
Saliency of the Issue (Meguid & Belanger)



# Strategies

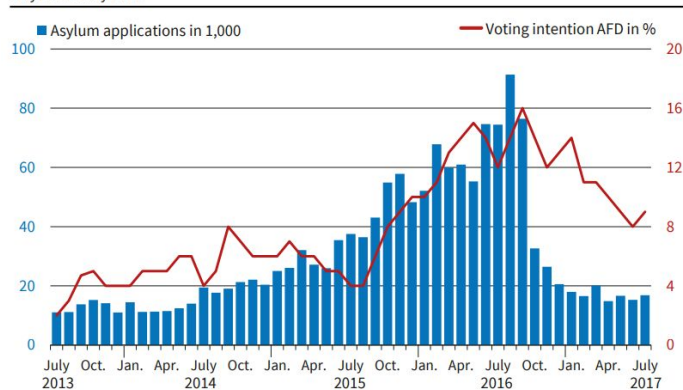
- Agenda Setting
  - Change the Public Agenda to Issues you “own”
  - Change the Agenda away from Issues your opponents own
- Riding the Wave (Ansonlabehere et al. 1996)
  - Trying to gain ownership by addressing an issue
  - Show “responsiveness” to the voters



# Profiting from Issue Salience

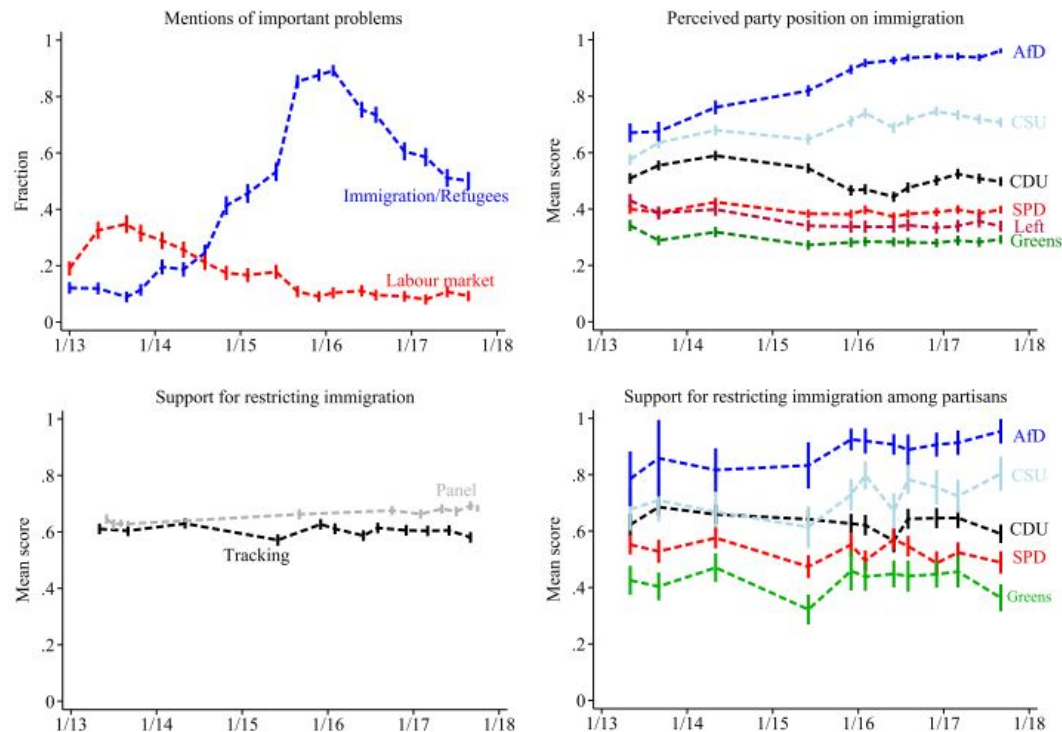
Alternative für Deutschland “captured” the issue of migration after being a primarily EU-skeptic party

Asylum Seekers and Support for the Far-Right in Germany  
July 2013–July 2017



Source: Infratest dimap (2017); Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees (2017).

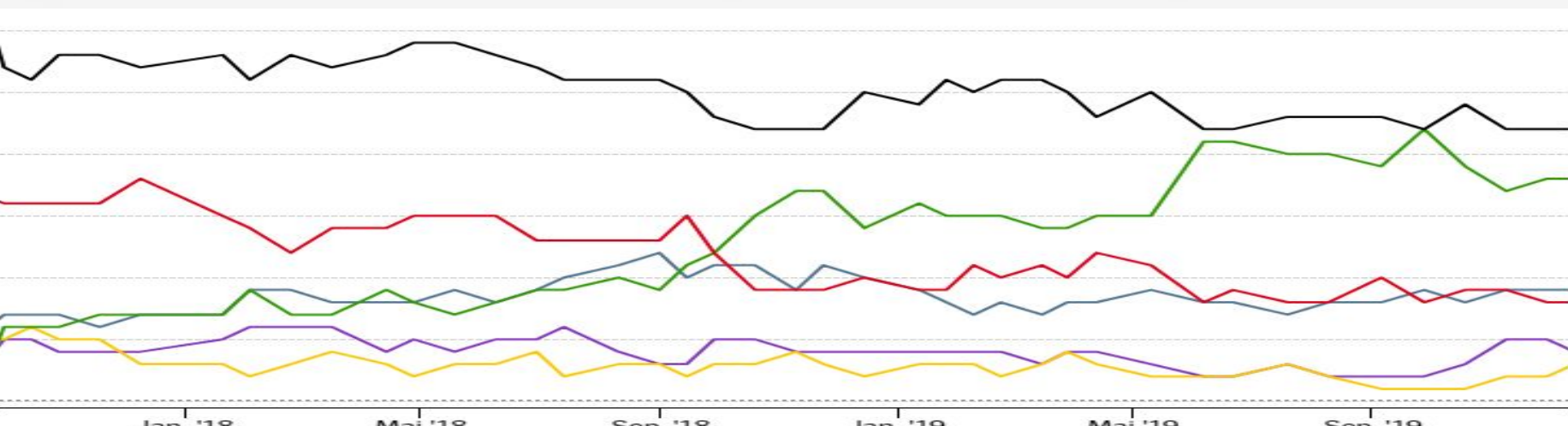
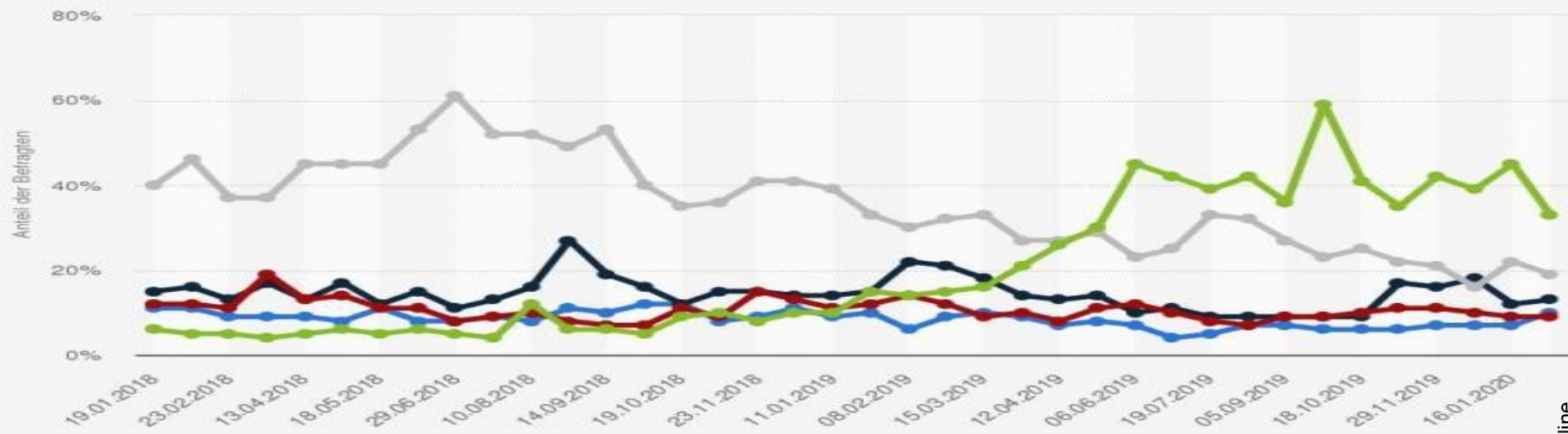
© ifo Institute



**Figure 1.** Immigration salience, perceived party positions, and attitudes, 2013–2017.

*Notes:* Weighed data from GLES Online Trackings T19–T36 and GLES Campaign Panels. Spikes are 95% confidence intervals. Mentions of first and second most important problems were hand-coded from open responses. The party position items asked respondents to rate whether parties were in favour of relaxing or tightening immigration restrictions using an 11-point scale. The immigration item asked respondents to report their own position on this issue using an 11-point scale (Trackings) and a 7-point scale (Panel). Rescaled range is 0–1.

# Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach gegenwärtig das wichtigste Problem in Deutschland?





# Discuss!

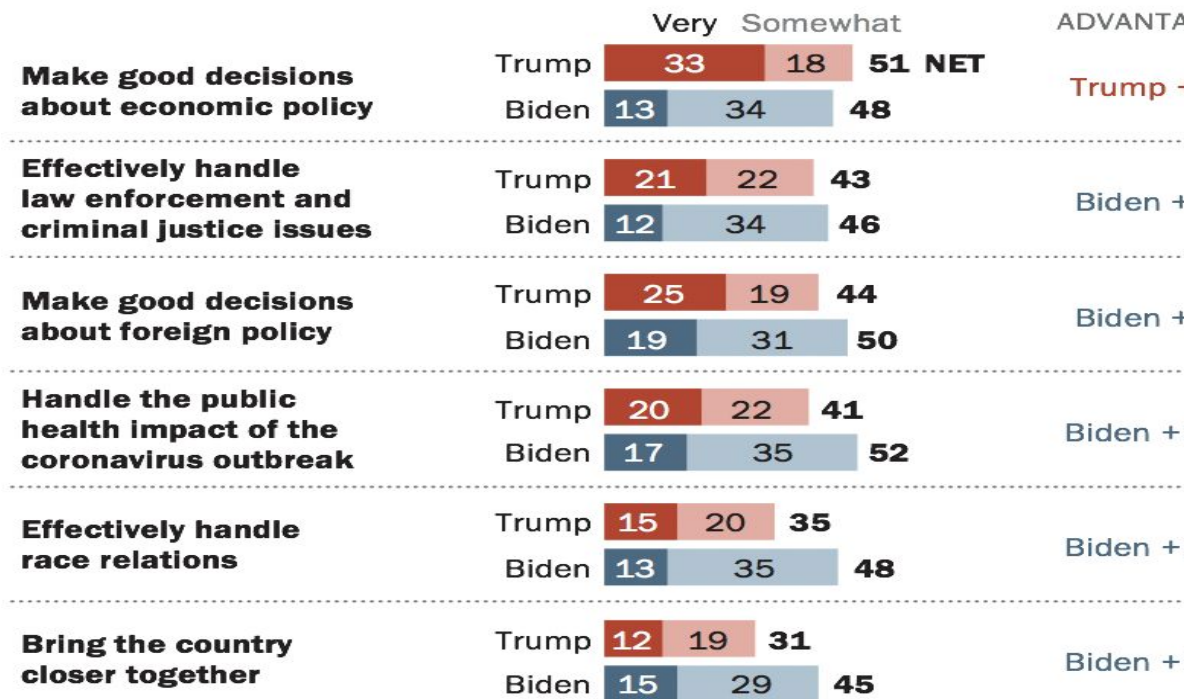
*Why and how does DIE LINKE adapt more readily to the Green owned issue of Climate Change?*



# Measuring Issue Ownership?

## More voters confident in Biden on unifying U.S., race, coronavirus; Trump, Biden seen similarly on economic policy

% of voters who say they are **very** or **somewhat** confident that \_\_\_\_ can do each of the following



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-22, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Discuss

*If you were the president of the US right now, what would you do/not do with regards to issue ownership theory?*