Who sets the agenda? MPs' responsiveness to NGOs, corporations and the media

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Abstract

Who holds power in a representative democracy can be identified by determining who sets the political agenda. Yet, competing for political attention is no easy task as MPs are recipient to constant demands from all different directions. In this article, I compare the agenda-setting capacity of NGO and multinational corporations on the attention parliamentarians give to different issues on Twitter. I answer that question with a dynamic analysis of issue attention using a new dataset of over two million tweets. Attention to different issues is identified and measured using a temporal content analysis approach that relies on semi-supervised machine learning. Vector autoregression (VAR) models are then fitted to capture the extent to which a shift in issue attention from one actor (at $t-1$) predicts a shift in another actor's attention (at t). Findings reveal broad support for the agenda-setting influence of the media and corporations in British politics.

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