Issue ownership is increasingly used to explain voters’ electoral choices. Various studies show that when voters consider a party to be better able to handle specific issues, this positively affects their party preference. However, a number of scholars have raised concerns about the confoundedness of especially competence issue ownership and party preferences, arguing that party preference may not only be a consequence of competence issue ownership: these reputations can also be caused by party preferences. Based on a Dutch three-wave panel survey, we show that while the impact of competence issue ownership on party preferences is substantial, shifts in party preferences exert a stronger influence on issue ownership. We discuss the implications of these findings for issue ownership theory.

Speaker

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Rens Vliegenthart’s research interests include media-politics relations, media coverage of social movements and businesses, election campaigns, European integration, soccer hooliganism and time series analysis. He is teaching in those and related topics at the University of Amsterdam.

Rens Vliegenthart is a regular contributor to the blog stukroodvlees, that publishes on political and social science research and current affairs (in Dutch).

Discussion

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