

# **Election campaigns and platforms do have an impact on public policy**

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# do elections (still) matter?

*mandates, institutions, and  
policy in western europe*



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Credit: CNRS

Do election campaigns shape public policy as they are supposed to in a democracy? Do the laws passed during a mandate really address the issues debated during elections? For countries with political systems as varied as Germany, Denmark, France and Italy, political scientists Isabelle Guinaudeau (CNRS) and Emiliano Grossman (Sciences Po)<sup>1</sup> answer in the affirmative. To reach this conclusion, they used data, collected with their colleagues from the [Comparative Agendas Project](#), to compare the themes of winning political programs with those of the laws passed during the term of office and found a match that has not declined since the 1980s.

This study challenges the notion that [public policy](#) implementation is more effective in so-called majoritarian systems where power is concentrated, such as France, than in more proportional systems, such as Denmark. In the United Kingdom, the most "majoritarian" country in the sample, the correlation between campaign themes and parliamentary debates only lasts for the first six months of the term of office. The authors also show that political programs are highly influenced by partisan competition—when a party's campaign theme receives media attention the opposing parties also take a position on the issue; therefore, immigration or ecology (for example) may enter the platforms of parties that would not traditionally [campaign](#) on these topics. Campaign debates thus form a "tunnel of attention," with the most discussed issues having a higher chance of being the subject of reform.

This study has just been published in a peer-reviewed book by Oxford University Press.

**More information:** Do Elections (Still) Matter?  
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Provided by CNRS

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