



What Parties do in Parliament: Improve ownership scores, follow, or lead public opinion?

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The study of party competition tends to focus on electoral contestation. This working paper investigates whether parties' behaviour *in-between* elections is better understood as part of a longer electoral game. It furthermore introduces a generally applicable template to analyse three strategies in particular: improve ownership scores; follow; or lead public opinion. It then compares the number of legislative proposals submitted by party, by bloc, and by strategy. All parties represented in the Swedish parliament (1991 – 2014) are used as a prototypical case study for this analysis. The findings suggest that the centre-left bloc is more likely to focus on 'owned' issues than their centre-right opponents are. The latter, conversely, displays no obvious pattern, although attempts to improve ownership scores appear somewhat more important than following or leading public opinion do. If the PRR parties are included, then the scores are moderated but also suggest a shift in emphasis towards leading public opinion. The final part of the paper discusses some of the (democratic) implications that an increased emphasis on competence and effective policy delivery may have on the party system and on the party-electorate dynamics.

Introduction

Scholars of party competition typically address the type of strategies adopted during an election (Green-Pedersen, 2004, Adams and Merrill, 1999, Budge, 1994), or the degree of difference between parties' positions (Rashkova, 2014, Grofman, 2004). An important development in this field is the identified shift from spatial to more ownership-style struggles (Belanger and Meguid, 2008; Petrocik, 1996). In other words, parties are now more likely to highlight their successful record of accomplishment than they are to offer the electorate a set of choices between different societal outcomes. 'Issue ownership' was originally introduced by Stokes (1963) as an alternative to the prevailing - spatial - models of understanding party competition (Downs, 1957). As such, focus shifted away from the different *ends* of party and government action towards 'which party has the *means* [emphasis added] – who is best able to deliver what (virtually) everybody wants' (Whiteley *et al*, 2005: 803). Consequently, political scientists were kept busy trying to construct a tool that allowed them to assess which party was perceived to be the best, or the most competent, at delivering on so-called valence issues. That is, issues which are difficult to adopt opposition positions on.

By far, said tool has been large scale surveys which include questions regarding which party that is perceived to be better at handling particular issues (Holian, 2004). The rationale being that, over time, parties become so closely linked with certain questions that voters associate (successful) delivery with said parties. During the election campaign, which tend to be the main focus for assessing how and when voters' perceptions of ownership are exploited by parties, competing actors will thus draw attention to issues on which they have a strong reputation. This change in strategy is partly explained by how parties increasingly agree on key outcomes, and how they then strive to attract the median voter. When party conflict is less pronounced, then it makes little electoral sense to campaign on and to emphasise their respective differences as voters evaluate competing alternatives based on past performance and their ability to handle the issue at stake (Green-Pedersen, 2007).

Elsewhere, Dalton (2014) discusses potential linkages between public 'wants' and how sensitive parties are to these demands. In order to achieve their electoral goals and ambitions, parties may need to pay attention to shifts in issue salience and in issue priorities. Homing in on the issue/s that voters consider to be the most important one can thus be a fruitful tactic to achieve particular party objectives (Ezrow *et al*, 2011). A third possibility posits that parties

are unaffected by such ownership struggles, and by the electoral demands placed upon them. What may be equally important is the agency parties are able exercise as they attempt to lead the electorate, set the agenda and to steer the conversation towards question/s that lie closer to who they are as a party (Toubeau and Massetti, 2013; Rovny, 2012).

Yet given the substantial body of literature that covers these areas, we know surprisingly little about how parties are supposed to evidence competent handling of key issues. Green and Hobolt's (2008; see also Petrocik, 1996) findings suggest that ownership is largely a function of voters' ad hoc evaluations, rather than something which originates from any deliberate action by the parties themselves. Equally, less is known about whether parties follow up on those issue/s that the electorate ranked highly during the election (Warwick, 2015), or whether parties mainly stick with trying to get 'their' issue through parliament (Vliegenhart *et al*, 2013).

The aim of this working paper is therefore to investigate the relationship between the above strategies and parties' *post-election behaviour* once they take up seats in parliament. The rationale for this approach is as follows. If parties seek to consolidate or strengthen their ownership ratings then evidencing some form of sustained commitment to the issue could potentially affect public perceptions of this commitment. Conversely, if ownership is understood as being 'able or less able to deliver' (Green and Hobolt, 2008: 462) then it should presumably be equally important that parties have also delivered by submitting proposals to be voted on in parliament. Investigating party action in-between elections thus seems particularly relevant should ownership be understood in positive - as well as in negative – terms regarding parties' management of an issue (Wagner and Meyer, 2015). The expectation is therefore that attempts to consolidate, or improve, ownership ratings should be reflected in the higher number of proposals that parties submit on that issue. But if parties are more concerned with following public opinion, then more submissions should be put in on the issue that voters ranked as the most important one. And, finally, if parties are more inclined to lead public opinion and to set the agenda, then the analysis should yield more results for the issue that parties are trying to lead on. This leads us to the following three hypotheses that are explored in this working paper –

(H1) Parties that aim to consolidate, or to improve, their ownership status submit more proposals on the issue that voters consider to be their main strength;

(H2) Parties following public opinion submit more proposals on the question that the electorate ranked as the most important one during the preceding election;

(H3) Parties seeking to lead public opinion, and to set the agenda, submit more proposals on the most salient issue in their election manifestos.

The above hypotheses are addressed by using the Swedish case as a prototypical - yet also representative - case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This choice is partly motivated by a commonly made assumption in the literature regarding ownership competition, and partly by accessibility to the relevant data. Regarding the former, previous studies have pointed to the greater likelihood of ownership struggles taking place in centripetal-type party systems rather than in centrifugal ones (see e.g. Bélanger and Meguid, 2008; Petrocik *et al*, 2003; Damore, 2004). The reason being that these institutional forces tend to push parties closer to each other. Accordingly, any incentives to emphasise the different outcomes parties have in mind tend to be reduced as they are assumed to be facing in the same direction. On the other hand, incentives to communicate competence, and effective issue management, tend to increase as voters evaluate parties and/or candidates based on past performance and reputation. Conversely, parties competing in centrifugal systems are expected to be more evenly spread out and ownership struggles should thus be less pronounced as voters' proximity to the different choices on offer become more important (Sartori, 1976). As Sweden has a proportional electoral system, with a comparatively low threshold for entry into parliament, one could reasonably assume ownership struggles to be the exception rather than the rule. But as noted elsewhere (see e.g. van der Brug, 2004; Odmalm, 2011), ownership competition has gradually become more frequent in proportional systems *as well*, and not always subject to the preconditions established in the literature (Green, 2007). Therefore, if the findings return support for (H1), this arguably suggests that ownership strategies have broader electoral appeal, and should thus be relevant beyond those first-past-the-post systems where they are typically pursued, or when parties and voters happen to be in agreement.

But the Swedish case also displays some representative traits of developments taking place elsewhere, which (H2) and (H3) pick up on. The question of how much attention is paid to public opinion, and whether parties follow any prompts made by the electorate, have been extensively studied (see e.g. Adams *et al*, 2004, Fishkin, 1995). Yet Ekengren and Oscarsson

(2011: 217) also point out that Swedish parties have not fully embraced the view that voters are ‘customers rather than members’, a finding which suggests that the necessity to respond to, or to follow, public opinion may be less of an issue than it is in party systems elsewhere (see e.g. Hills, 2002).

The agenda-setting literature, on the other hand, emphasises how certain questions take priority over others, and how competing actors either respond to or try to influence this hierarchy of issues (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). Swedish parliamentary politics has traditionally been characterised by its consensual nature, meaning that conflict and reactive-type modes of competition tended to be scarce. This could indicate that the incentives to lead public opinion may therefore take a backseat. A lower return rate for the issue that parties’ emphasise in their respective manifestos could therefore be a reasonable expectation. But as Hinnfors (1997) finds, anticipatory and reactive types of behaviour are likely to co-exist. In contrast to (H2), then, the expectation is that the results for (H3) could very well be higher, especially since Hinnfors’ data ‘only’ covers the period from 1973-1991, and significant changes have taken place in the Swedish party system since then (Håkansson and Naurin, 2014).

Methodology

To assess which issue/s parties are considered to own, the paper invokes two sets of surveys - the post-election data gathered by Holmberg *et al* (for 1991-2006), and the VALU exit poll survey (for 2010 – 2014). Both are standard data sets used for public opinion polling in Sweden. For consistency, the former would ideally have been used across the studied time-period. However, at the time of writing, the 2014 survey was still being processed and was not publically available, whereas the 2010 data were only partially completed. Yet both surveys ask questions that can be used as proxy for establishing ownership, either over particular issues, or over certain policy domains. While their phrasing differ – [Issue]: Good Policy – Traditional Parliament Parties/[Issue]: Good Policy – New and Smaller Parties (Holmberg *et al*); ‘Which party has the best policies on [issue]? (VALU) – they nevertheless capture public attitudes towards parties’ perceived competence. For reasons of parsimony, the

highest score a party received on an issue was considered to be the issue that it ‘owned’. Establishing ownership in this way inevitably comes with a few caveats however. First, it meant that more than one party could potentially own the same question during the same time-period. For example, in 1991 – 1994, the Left Party, the Greens, and the Centre Party all received their highest scores on ‘the Environment’. The same situation was again present in 1998-2002 when the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats scored the highest on ‘Care for the Elderly’. Second, the difference between the ‘owned’ issue and that which was not would occasionally be marginal yet the distance between the best and second best performing party would be greater. In 1998, for example, the Conservative party receives their highest score on ‘Taxes’ (18%), whereas they score 16% on ‘Employment’. The Social Democrats, conversely, score 27% on ‘Employment’ but only 2% on Taxes. While the Conservative party clearly owns ‘Taxes’, especially in relation to the Social Democrats, it is less obvious, perhaps, whether the Conservatives’ ‘best issue’ is ‘Taxes’ or ‘Employment’ since these scores are so close together. And, finally, the same party could potentially also own more than one question during the same time-period (as in the case of the Social Democrats in 2006-10 for example). Such qualifications thus raise methodological issues in terms of how to determine ‘ownership’, especially when the data do not reveal a clear ‘winner’. Yet the overall pattern suggests that one party typically holds ownership over one issue, i.e. the electorate’s verdict is that it has the best policy solutions compared to other parties. The respective ‘owners’ are summarised in Table 1.

(Table 1 about here).

The same survey data were then used to establish which question that the electorate considers to be the most important one (see Table 2.). Again, the highest rated area was taken as an indicator of this assessment. Much like the questions asked on issue ownership, there are some discrepancies in terms of phrasing. Holmberg *et al* ask ‘Important Issue at Election’, whereas the exit poll queries ‘How Important are the following Questions for Your Choice of Party?’ The way the latter question is posed can potentially blur the analytical edges between ‘issue ownership’ and ‘issue salience’. The adopted approach in this paper equally raises questions for how to determine *the* most important issue for the electorate. And, again, this uncertainty arose when scores often tended to be quite close. In 2014, for example, the

distance between the most important issue ('Education') and the second most important one ('Health care') was around six percent.

(Table 2. about here)

And, finally, to establish which question parties are trying to lead on, the paper adopts a salience approach and has simply taken the first issue emphasised in their respective manifestos. If an issue is placed at the beginning then it is presumably more important than one that is placed towards the end. Said question was then used as an indicator for how parties are trying to lead public opinion and set the agenda by emphasising 'their' key issue. Yet this approach also involved an element of interpretation as some parties would list issues in numerical order (e.g. the Christian Democrats in 1991), whereas others would precede this 'list' with a more general discussion of the state of the country (e.g. the Conservative party in 1994). When the latter occurred, the first time a policy area was mentioned it was subsequently chosen to represent the importance it presumably played for the party. The results of these assessments are summarised in Table 3.

(Table 3. about here)

Having established issue ownership, issue salience, and the question parties consider to be key, the next step was to identify which route parties went down once they entered into parliament. To do this, a series of detailed searches were carried out on the Swedish parliamentary database - <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Start/Sok/#detailed> – using keywords relevant to the identified policy domains. The database allows for comprehensive searches to be made, but as the principle aim of this paper is to investigate potential links between

electoral and parliamentary strategies, the searches were limited to ‘motions’ and ‘questions to the government’. But since the same issue could have multiple owners, and the same party could own more than one issue, additional searches were therefore conducted when these situations emerged, and the highest return rate was noted. By the same token, the Sweden Democrats proved somewhat challenging when it came to determine which question the party was trying to lead on. Their 2010 and 2014 manifestos do not flag up the immigration ‘issue’ as obviously as one might expect them to do. Instead ‘Employment’ gets top billing in 2010, whereas ‘Welfare/Health Care’ is mentioned first in 2014. Yet at the same time, immigration is very much inter-linked with these two areas for the party. And since the existing literature also suggests how the ‘issue’ lies to the very core of the contemporary PRR (see e.g. Rydgren and Ruth, 2013; Mudde, 1999), additional calculations were thus made for the number of submissions that the party put in on immigration.

When tactics differed (as with the Liberal Party in 1991-94), then separate searches were carried out. Using the same example again, this meant ‘Immigration’ (ownership); ‘Employment’ (electoral salience), and ‘Democracy’ (leading). Depending on which tactic that yielded the highest number of returns, this was then considered to be the strategy that the party pursued in parliament (‘Leading’ in the case of the Liberal Party), and given a score of 1. These calculations were then replicated across the studied time-period for all parties (1991 – 2014) (See Table 4.) And finally, to measure the proportion per strategy, the individual scores were added together and divided by the total number of elections (see Table 5.).

(Table 4. about here)

(Table 5. about here)

But as Table 4. also shows, the three approaches would occasionally align. In 1991-94, for example, the Social Democrats not only owns ‘Employment’ but the public also considers it to be the most important issue facing the country, and it is equally the first policy area

mentioned in the party's manifesto. Other combinations also emerged. For example, in 2006-10, the public ranks 'Employment' as their top priority, which also corresponds to the first issue flagged up in the Centre Party's manifesto, yet the party owns 'Regional Policies'. In these instances, the scores were weighted as follows: 0.5 (two approaches per election cycle), and 0.33 (three approaches per election cycle), added together and then divided by the total number of elections, as per the following example – Social Democrats (ownership): 1991 – 1994 (0.33) + 1994-1998 (0) + 1998 – 2002 (0.33) + 2002-2006 (0) + 2006 – 2010 (1) + 2010 – 2014 (0) = 28%.

Findings

These calculations reveal some expected but also some unexpected results. Regarding the former, Tables 2. and 3. confirm the dominance of the 'old' left-right cleavage in Swedish politics (Sundberg, 1999). Material questions, such as 'Employment', are clearly more important for parties than non-material issues are. And the electorate equally puts forward economic-type questions as their main concern. While one can also observe a similar pattern in the manifestos (79%), the proportion of GAL/TAN-issues that parties flag up is therefore surprising (21%). Yet looking at the nature of the questions that parties are considered to own, then the distribution is 50/50 between economic and non-economic areas (see Table 1). In other words, the types of questions that parties prioritise, and those that the electorate ranks highly, are not necessarily of the same kind as those issues that parties are considered to own. This could suggest how the determinants for ownership may be a factor of how parties' have handled the issue at stake rather than how they have responded to, or tried to lead public opinion. At the same time, one can also discern a difference between dominating and supporting parties. The former tend to be perceived as more competent on economic issues whereas the latter are more trusted on non-economic questions. So far, the analysis has confirmed several of the predictions made elsewhere in the literature (see e.g. Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009, Hobolt *et al*, 2008, Dalton, 2002, Budge and Farlie, 1983, Schattschneider, 1960).

The paper will now turn to its' original contribution, namely, to further probe parties' behaviour once they take up seats in parliament. Taken together, then, the data suggest a degree of overlap between the 'aims' of competing actors, and between the 'wants' of the electorate. The ownership figures, on the other hand, point to an even division between economic and non-economic types of questions, and, consequently, to a split between high and low(er) salience issues. This suggests that there could be more proposals relating to those questions which resonate well with the electorate, and/or to the issues that parties prioritise, than there will be to the questions that parties own. One could reasonably assume, therefore, that the data should provide greater support for Hs 2 and 3 than for H1. Table 5. shows the average results per approach, per party and per bloc (centre-left and centre-right) from 1991 to 2014. It also contains separate calculations for the party system as a whole, including and excluding the PRR.

On aggregate, mainstream parties submit more proposals on issues that they own (46%) whereas following public opinion is less likely to occur (24%). And while there is a higher submission ratio on the issues that parties are trying to lead on, these numbers are also significantly lower compared to the questions that parties own (30%). Including the PRR shuffles the ranking somewhat, and leading public opinion becomes more important. But these figures are also inflated since there is only one data point for each of the niche party contenders (1991-94 for New Democracy, and 2010 – 14 for the Sweden Democrats). Worthy of note is how the Sweden Democrats, rather counter intuitively in fact, place their main emphasis on following public, and the party submits more proposals on 'Education' (197) than they do on 'Immigration' (96). Equally, the amount of submissions that New Democracy make on the immigration 'issue' is significantly lower (21) compared to the issue that the party is trying to lead on, namely 'Democracy' (269).

This initial pattern continues once the scores are broken down by bloc and by party. Yet there is also some interesting variation. Attempting to improve on, or at least consolidate, parties' ownership scores have clearly dominated the tactics that the centre-left bloc pursued (54%). The Left Party, in particular, submits almost three times as many proposals on those issues that it owns (67%) compared to the questions that the public (25%) - as well as the party's manifestos (8%) – consider to be the most important ones. The Greens behave in a similar fashion (58% Ownership, and 42% Leading Public Opinion) but also returned the astonishing result of 0% for Following Public Opinion. As expected perhaps, the distribution per approach is more evenly spread out for the Social Democrats. The party submits an equal

amount of proposals on those issues which it owns issues as it does on those ranked highest by the electorate (36%), whereas the remaining approach exhibits a return of 28%.

The results for the centre-right bloc equally show a higher frequency of submissions on those questions that are owned, but this score is also bought down by the low return rate generated by the Liberal Party. The results per approach are however more evenly spread out, and the distance between the highest (38%; Ownership) and the lowest (28%; Following Public Opinion) is not as distinct as it is for the centre-left. The Conservative party has by far the highest number of submissions on owned questions (64%) but exhibits a score for Following Public Opinion (22%) which is otherwise typical for the centre-right parties as it is for the party system as a whole. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the party is the least likely centre-right candidate to try and lead public opinion (14%).

The Centre Party and the Christian Democrats show an equal number of submissions for owned questions (42%). And they are equally similar regarding the submissions that follow, or that try to lead, public opinion (25% and 33% for the former, and 33% and 25% for the latter). The Liberal Party, on the other hand, is a clear outlier. The party not only places its main emphasis on trying to lead public opinion - as evidenced by their 64% average - but also downplays those issues on which they are perceived to be the most competent (6%), particularly regarding the immigration 'issue' (Odmalm, 2011).

Concluding discussion

The results would thus suggest stronger support for H1 than for Hs 2 and 3. With the exception of the Liberal Party, all mainstream actors have put more effort into either retaining or improving their ownership status. This outcome is somewhat surprising given what the literature on 'issue competition' and 'issue ownership' has established previously. As such, the findings arguably point to how ownership strategies are not only confined to particular institutional configurations or to particular electoral systems. Furthermore, that such competitive strategies apply across the ideological spectrum, and to virtually all parties, and

have largely come to dominate the tactics they pursue, would add further weight to the state of flux that West European party systems are said to be in (Mair, 1989). In other words, as party systems become increasingly more complex and more volatile, and as traditional cleavages and positioning on said divides become increasingly less relevant, then shifting attention over to parties' competent management of an issue may make more sense as an electoral strategy (see e.g. van Biezen, 2012; Katz and Mair, 1995).

But these findings also raise further questions regarding the dynamics of party competition and how parties' long-term strategies may come to affect their short-term behaviour, especially in the months leading up to an election. An obvious point to address in future research is whether these attempts to build up a back catalogue of delivery will actually pay off and, ultimately, if they will result in an increased share of the vote. Or will these efforts be largely vain due to a different set of party dynamics kicking in once campaigning and canvassing is underway? A quick glance at the election results in the 1991 – 2014 period suggests that the latter might be the case. When parties focus solely on strengthening or consolidating their ownership status, then the outcome has not always been in their favour. This appears to be the case for the two dominating parties in particular. The Social Democrats preceded the 2010 election with a significant amount of submissions on their strongest issue, namely on the 'Economy', yet the election results show an almost five percent drop in support for the party. Equally, the Conservative party's poor performance in 2002 occurred despite the party pushing their owned issue, namely 'Taxes', in the previous parliamentary cycle. Yet both parties saw their vote share increase when they managed to balance an emphasis on owned issues with following and leading public opinion, as shown by the 1994 and the 2002 results for the Social Democrats, and by the 2010 result for the Conservative party. But when the (supporting) Liberal Party adopted a similar approach in 2010 – 2014, their support went down by almost two percent.

For the remaining parties, pushing their owned issues in parliament yields some electoral gains but also some electoral losses. Although the 1998 results for the Left Party suggest that consolidating ownership over 'the EU' did pay off, their share of the votes decreases in 2002 as it does in 2006 despite pursuing the same tactic, albeit on 'Equality'. By the same token, the support for the Greens increases in 2006 and in 2010, as it does for the Christian Democrats in 1998, which were all preceded by a significant number of submissions on the 'Environment' and on 'Family Policy' respectively. But in 1994 the latter party sees their vote share go down by almost a half even though the same strategy is adopted. And, finally,

the Centre Party's strive to consolidate ownership over the 'Environment' does not seem to have affected their downward trajectory from 1991 to 1998.

Although ownership-style competition appears to be in the direction that Swedish parties are heading (Christensen *at el*, 2014), it may also be accompanied by several short- and long-term implications. The alternatives voters are presented with are likely to become less clear as parties focus on their competent (and on the opposition's *in*competent) handling of the issue at stake. In turn, this may serve to widen the gap between political parties and the electorate as their different visions of the 'good' society are likely to be down played or ignored, thereby increasing pre-existing levels of agenda friction (Schattschneider, 1960).

The long-term implications are perhaps less clear. On the one hand, voters' level of trust in political elites and in governments (Holmberg, 1999) may well witness a (further) decline. As the analysis has also revealed a scarcity of instances where the political parties followed up on those electoral cues that concern the most important issue facing the country, the dissonance between elite 'aims' and electoral 'wants' may contribute further to the democratic deficit that voters perceive. And should parties also have *negative* issue ownership, that is, '[their] strong reputation on an issue is not for being good at tackling it or for proposing the right solutions; instead it is for being unable and ill-suited to resolve the problem and for suggesting wrong-headed policies' (Wagner and Meyer, 2015: 798), then this is a particularly toxic situation to be in and one that is likely to be particularly difficult to get out of.

But on the other hand, an increased emphasis on owned issues could also result in parties experiencing some form of identity crises. As the analysis has also shown, attempts to set the agenda, and thereby lead public opinion, returned an average submission rate of 30%. Although there is significant inter-party variation regarding this approach, as the results for the Liberal (64%) and the Left parties (8%) suggest, the fact that political actors appear less inclined to follow their electoral compass could also point to a further decline in the role that ideology plays in the political 'game' (Elff, 2007; Fukuyama, 1992).

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Table 1. Ownership over Policy Areas (1991 – 2014)

	1991-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
SAP	Empl	Empl	Empl	WelfHealth	Econ/SocSec	SocSec
V	Env	EU	Equality	Equality	L-R Ideology	L-R Ideology
MP	Env	Env	Env	Env	Env	Env
C	Env	Env	Env	RegPol	RegPol	RegPol
FP	Immi	Immi	Care for Eld	Immi	Immi	Edu
KD	FamPol	FamPol	Care for Eld	Ethics/Morals	FamPol	FamPol
M	Econ	Taxes	Taxes	Law/Order	Empl	Econ
SD	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ND	Immi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Ownership = Best party on [issue]; highest score received
 Source: Holmberg *et al.* (1991-2006); VALU (2010-2014)

Table 2. Most Important Issue for the Electorate (1991 – 2014)

	1991-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
Following	Empl	Empl	Empl	WelfHealth	Empl	Edu

Following Public Opinion = Most important issue for the electorate (1991-2006)/Importance of issue for party choice (2010-14; 2014-2018)

Source: Holmberg *et al.* (1991-2006); VALU (2010-2014)

Table 3. Leading Public Opinion (1991 – 2014)

	1991-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
SAP	Empl	Econ	Empl	FamPol	Empl	Empl
V	Empl	Solidarity	Empl	Empl	Empl	Empl
MP	Env	The EU [Heading: The Government issue]	Env	FamPol	FamPol	Env
C	Infra	WelfHealth	Env	Budget	Empl	Empl
FP	Demo	Empl	Econ	Integr	Edu	Edu
KD	WelfHealth	Econ	FamPol	Ethics/Moral	FamPol	Empl
M	Econ	Econ	Econ	Econ	Empl	Empl
SD	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Empl
ND	Demo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Leading Public Opinion = Most important question for party [First issue flagged up in the manifesto]

Source: individual party manifestos.

Table 4: Type of Approach (by election cycle and party, 1991 - 2018)

	1991-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
SAP	Own/Flw/Ld	Own/Flw	Own/Flw/Ld	Ld	Own	Flw
V	Own	Own	Own	Own	Flw/Ld	Flw
MP	Own/Ld	Ld	Own/Ld	Own	Own	Own/Ld
C	Own	Own	Own/Ld	Ld	Flw/Ld	Flw
FP	Ld	Flw/Ld	Ld	Flw	Ld	Own/Flw/Ld
KD	Own	Own	Ld	Flw	Own/Ld	Flw
M	Own/Ld	Own	Own	Own	Own/Flw/Ld	Flw
ND	Ld	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SD	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Flw

Key words: Labour Market; Environment; Infrastructure; Immigration; Democracy; Family Policy; Health Care; The Economy; the EU; Solidarity; Tax; Equality; Care of Elderly; Regional Policies; Budget; Integration; Ethics; Morals; Law and Order; Social Security; Ideology; Education; Profit; Education; Health Care; Education; Family Policy; The Economy; Education; Welfare.

Source: <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Start/Sok/#detailed>

Table 5: Average Results (by Approach; by Party and by Bloc (1991 – 2014))

	Ownership	Follow	Leading
SAP	36%	36%	28%
V	67%	25%	8%
MP	58%	0%	42%
Centre-left	54%	20%	26%
C	42%	25%	33%
FP	6%	30%	64%
KD	42%	33%	25%
M	64%	22%	14%
Centre-Right	38%	28%	34%
SD	0%	100%	0%
ND	0%	0%	100%
Average (including PRR)	23%	37%	40%
Average (excluding PRR)	46%	24%	30%