

Pledge-based accountability

Voter responses to fulfilled and broken election pledges

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Göteborg Studies in Politics 165

2021

Avhandlingen baseras på följande delstudier:

Naurin, E., Soroka S. and Markwat, N. (2019) Asymmetric accountability: An experimental investigation of biases in evaluations of governments' election pledges. *Comparative Political Studies*, 52:13-14, 2207-2234. DOI: 10.1177/0010414019830740.

Markwat, N. (2021a) The policy-seeking voter: Evaluations of government performance beyond the economy. *SN Social Sciences*, 1:26, 1-21. DOI: 10.1007/s43545-020-00030-4.

Markwat, N. (2021b) Not as expected: The role of performance expectations in voter responses to election pledge fulfilment. Unpublished manuscript.

Markwat, N. (2021c) Partisan cheerleading outside a partisan context: Biased responses to political survey questions. Unpublished manuscript.

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i statsvetenskap som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges till offentlig granskning fredagen den 4 juni 2021, kl. 13.15 i Sappören, Sprängkullsgatan 25, Göteborgs Universitet (samt via Zoom).



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Markwat, Niels. 2021. *Pledge-based accountability: Voter responses to fulfilled and broken election pledges*. Göteborg Studies in Politics 165, edited by Bo Rothstein, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. ISBN 978-91-8009-372-9, ISSN 0346-5942

Abstract

Political parties communicate their plans to voters via promises made during election campaigns. While it has been found that governments generally take these promises they make seriously, it has also been established that many voters believe otherwise. Less is known, however, about whether governments are held to account for the extent to which they fulfil their promises. This dissertation examines the effects of broken and fulfilled election pledges on voter evaluations of government performance. The findings challenge the idea that rewards and punishments for election pledge performance are straightforwardly administered by voters, instead emphasising that pledge-based accountability processes are asymmetric and affected by the biases of voters. The main conclusion is that pledge fulfilment is not the procedural value for voters suggested in some classical theoretical contributions. Instead, while most voters find it important that election promises are not broken, they find it even more important that the decisions that are taken align with their own preferences.

Keywords: election pledges, accountability, retrospective voting, partisanship, negativity bias, survey experiments