

B1.1 (GLES) Campaign Dynamics of Media Coverage and Public Opinion



Director/ Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck

Researchers/ Mona Krewel, Julia Partheymüller, Sascha Huber, Thorsten Faas, Stefanie Walter

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Research Questions

Focusing on the three Bundestag elections of 2009, 2013, and 2017 the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) analyses how today's mobile electorate adapts to the new constellation of electoral politics which is characterized by an increased degree of complexity.

Within the GLES, this MZES project deals with research questions that concern the short-term dynamics in the process of voting decision-making:

- How do campaigns affect citizens' perceptions, attitudes and voting behaviour?
- To what extent do news reporting and highly visible media events, such as TV debates, induce campaign dynamics?

Data & Methods

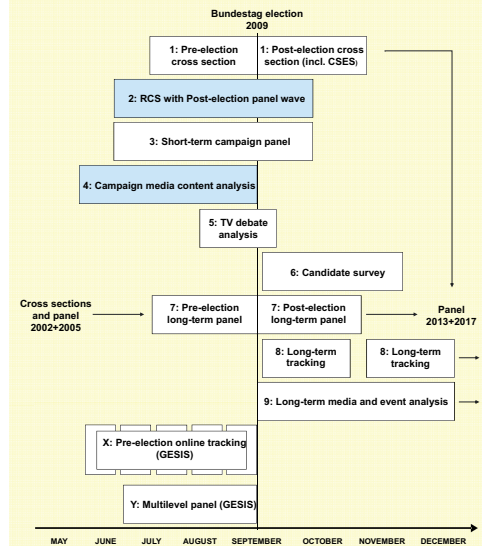
Within the GLES, this MZES project is responsible for conducting two components:

- a rolling cross-section (RCS) campaign survey with post-election panel wave and
- a content analysis of mass media coverage during the election campaign.

In 2009, during each of the last 60 days of the campaign on average 100 voters were interviewed according to the rules of the RCS design after the election about two thirds of the respondents were re-interviewed.

For the media content analysis the four major TV news programs (ARD, ZDF, RTL, Sat.1) and the most important print media outlets (FAZ, FR, SZ, BILD, TAZ, Welt) were analysed.

Research Design



All data are available via GESIS:
www.gesis.org/gles

Selected Research Findings

Campaign activation of 'fundamentals'

Prior research claims that campaigns mainly affect voters by activating electoral 'fundamentals', such as the economy, partisanship or ideology. The 2005-2009 contrast reveals that this claim only holds when there is strong partisan contestation:

- During the highly polarized campaign of 2005, voters who believed that the economy had improved became increasingly more likely to support the governing Red-Green coalition. In addition, the SPD markedly gained support among its own partisans.
- In 2009 conflict between the major parties was mitigated by the Grand coalition. Despite the economic crisis, economic perceptions and partisanship became only marginally activated.

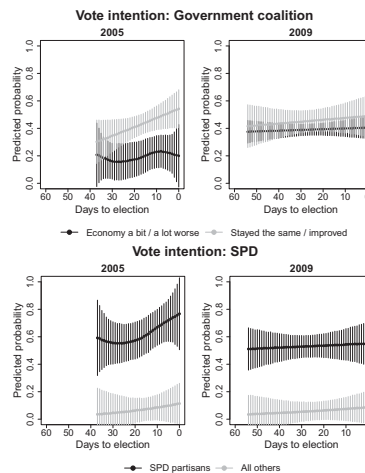
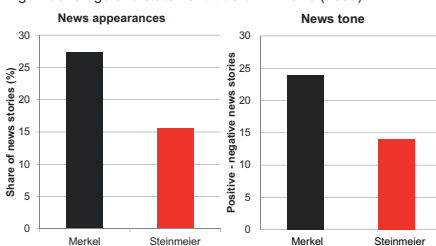


Fig.1: Campaign activation of economic perceptions and SPD partisanship, 2005-2009 (GAM model)

Fig.2: Coverage and statement bias of TV news (2009)



Political leaders and the news media

News reporting may be affected by two types of biases:

- coverage bias (the share of news reports is unbalanced between sides), and
- statement bias (the number of positive versus negative statements is unbalanced)

Earlier studies have shown that both types of bias may influence attitudes towards political candidates as well as voting behavior.

The 2009 content analysis data of the TV news coverage depicts an 'incumbent bonus': The chancellor did receive a higher share of coverage, and the news tone was overall more positive.

Selected Publications

Books:

- Schmitt-Beck, Rüdiger (Ed.) (2012): *Wählen in Deutschland*. Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlag. [PVS Sonderheft; 45]

Journal Articles:

- Partheymüller, Julia, and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck (2012): A "Social Logic" of Demobilization: The Influence of Political Discussants on Electoral Participation at the 2009 German Federal Election. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 22, issue 2, p. 457-478.
- Schmitt-Beck, Rüdiger, and Julia Partheymüller (2012): Why Voters Decide Late: A Simultaneous Test of Old and New Hypotheses at the 2005 and 2009 German Federal Elections. *German Politics*, 21, issue 3, p. 299-316.
- Rohrschneider, Robert, Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Franziska Jung (2012): Short-term factors versus long-term values: Explaining the 2009 election results. *Electoral Studies*, 31, issue 1, p. 20-34.
- Maier, Jürgen, and Thorsten Faas (2011): 'Miniature Campaigns' in Comparison: The German Televised Debates, 2002-09. *German Politics*, 20, issue 1, p. 75-91.
- Krewel, Mona, Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Ansgar Wolsing (2011): The Campaign and its Dynamics at the 2009 German General Election. *German Politics*, 20, issue 1, p. 28-50.