CHAPTER 28

Agenda-Setting and Framing in Europe

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Abstract Studies of agenda-setting deal with the attention (or lack thereof) that issues receive in policy-making processes. It is intimately linked with framing, which serves to highlight certain (aspects of) issues to the detriment of others. Agenda-setting theory originated and was largely developed in the United States, but can fruitfully be applied in a European context as well. This chapter identifies and discusses the key insights from agenda-setting theory and their relevance for understanding politics, policy processes, and public administration in Europe. It shows what amendments to the original, US-based theories have been made in the European context and how those amendments have contributed to theory-building more generally. This relates both to agenda-setting within European states and in the European Union.

28.1 Introduction

In traditional accounts, agenda-setting figures as the first stage of the policy cycle. It is then seen as the starting point of a policy-making process, which is followed by decision-making, implementation, and evaluation (or a more fine-grained variety of these stages). In the recent policy studies literature, this 'stages heuristics' has come under severe criticism, since actual

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policy-making processes do not proceed in such neat fashion from one 'stage' to another (Sabatier 2007, 6–7).

This has led to a shift away from 'agenda-setting' as a stage in the policy-making process to agenda-setting as an aspect of policy-making in all 'stages' and of politics in general (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014). In addition to approaches that focus on substantive preferences and interests, agenda-setting theory accords a central role to the way in which attention is distributed in a political system. The key questions in this approach therefore are why some issues gain attention while others do not, and what effects this has on politics and policy-making.

Agenda-setting is intimately connected with framing, which can be defined as 'the process of selecting, emphasizing and organizing aspects of complex issues according to an overriding evaluative or analytical criterion' (Daviter 2007, 654). Framing concerns the way in which issues are defined. This determines whether they are seen as 'problems' that need to be addressed and therefore will come onto the political agenda, or rather as 'conditions' that simply need to be endured and have no place on the political agenda (Cobb and Ross 1997; Stone 1989). Moreover, by highlighting certain aspects and causes of an issue, framing structures the debate on the issue and the potential solutions that are considered (Rochefort and Cobb 1994).

In this chapter, agenda-setting and framing will be discussed in a European context. Although agenda-setting theory arose and developed in the United States, it has by now become part and parcel of European scholarship as well. The next section will set the stage by discussing a number of conceptual issues, as well as the relevance of agenda-setting theory for our understanding of policy-making, politics, and public administration. Then, I will give an overview of the key insights from the agenda-setting literature, as it developed in the United States. The subsequent chapter focuses on applications of these insights in a European context, both on a domestic level and within the European Union. In the final section, a European research agenda for agenda-setting and framing will be sketched on the basis of this overview of the literature.

28.2 What are Agendas and Why Do They Matter?

28.2.1 What are Agendas?

An agenda has been defined by John Kingdon (1995, 3; see also Cobb and Elder 1972, 86) as the set of issues that receive serious consideration. The key term in this definition is (serious) 'consideration' or, as it is more commonly called in the agenda-setting literature, 'attention.' Issues are on the agenda if they are considered important/serious/a priority at a given point in time. Agenda-setting is the process in which actors (seek to) bring issues onto the agenda.

In thinking about and studying agendas, the mirror image is equally important: issues that do not make it onto the agenda. Attention and non-attention are two sides of the same coin. From a cognitive and institutional point of view, agendas have a limited scope because both individuals and organizations have limited information processing capacities (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Since it is impossible to devote attention to all potential issues at the same time, attention for one issue implies that another issue is ignored. As a result, only a subset of all possible issues actually gains attention. Agenda-setting is therefore primarily a struggle for attention, in which attention for issues can only rise if attention for other issues falls.

Adding to this cognitive-institutional argument, political perspectives stress the interests and political maneuvering involved in agenda-setting. In one of the founding contributions to the early agenda-setting literature, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) famously made the point that power is not just about influencing decision-making, but also about the ability to keep issues off the agenda, and thereby restrict the scope of political debate (see also Cobb and Ross 1997; Lukes 2005). As a result, in agenda-setting processes, two sets of actors are often pitted against each other. Actors that want to change the status quo try to get a certain issue onto the agenda, while actors that support the status quo have an interest in keeping attention for that issue low. After all, attention for an issue is a precondition for political action, which also implies that keeping attention for an issue low is the most effective way of maintaining the status quo.

28.2.2 Types of Agenda

So far, the term 'agenda' has been used as if it is one single set of issues. One can distinguish, however, between different types of agenda. In making these further distinctions, one can either use actor-based or analytical criteria. Actor-based definitions of types of agendas are used most widely. They identify different types of agenda depending on *who* is giving attention. The literature normally discerns between the following types of agenda (Princen 2009, 21):

- The political agenda: the set of issues that receive serious consideration from political actors;
- The media agenda: the set of issues that receive serious consideration in the media;
- The public agenda: the set of issues that are seen as important by the general public.[1]

Given the focus of this handbook, this chapter will limit itself to the political agenda (or to make it a bit more specific: the 'policy agenda' of issues that receive serious consideration by policy-makers). Following the actor-based

logic, more specialized agendas can be discerned within the political agenda. For instance, in a parliamentary democracy, the political agenda subsumes, among others, the agendas of the parliament and government. Within those institutions, even more specialized agendas can be found (e.g. of a specific department or parliamentary committee).

Alternatively, more specific agendas can also be defined in terms that cross institutional boundaries. Often, a policy community in a given issue area shares a certain agenda. In that case, policy experts in that issue area that come from different institutional backgrounds (civil servants, members of parliament, interest group representatives, academics, journalists) agree on the set of issues that are most important in the issue area. In this way, there may be a policy agenda in the area of health, which is shared by participants in the health policy community. The specialized agendas of policy communities then feed into the overall 'political agenda.'

Another, more analytical way of distinguishing between types of agenda is to look at the *status of issues*. Thus, Kingdon (1995, 4) makes a distinction (within the political agenda) between the set of issues which are discussed in government in a more general way (the governmental agenda) and the set of issues for which proposals have been tabled that are up for active decision-making (the decision agenda).

Specifying both dimensions of agendas (*whose* agenda are we talking about and *which degree/type of attention* is being paid to an issue?) is crucial in agenda-setting studies. Too often, the term 'agenda' is used in a general sense, without making clear exactly whose agenda is being meant and what status the issue has on that agenda. Since variations in attention within and between agendas are key to understanding agenda-setting processes, careful specification of both dimensions is needed.

28.2.3 Why Agenda-Setting Matters

Definitions and typologies are little more than semantic exercises if they remain unconnected to substantive questions and debates. Studying agenda-setting is important because it can shed light on at least three important debates. First, studying agenda-setting helps to understand (the outcomes of) policy-making processes. Agenda-setting determines which issues are taken up for active policy-making and which alternatives are considered in the policy-making process. Without a consideration of what happens in terms of agenda-setting, an important part of the decisions that are (explicitly or implicitly) made during policy-making processes remains hidden from sight. This concerns not just 'new' policies. Agenda-setting also affects implementation processes, since the salience of an issue determines how much attention is being paid to implementing and enforcing existing policies (Versluis 2007).

Second, agendas reflect (and thereby reveal) the bias in a political system. Political systems are more open to some issues than to others. For instance,

it has proven extremely difficult to bring gun control onto the agenda of the US federal government. Similarly, nuclear energy is something of a taboo issue in German politics. In the case of the EU, several observers have argued that it tends to privilege market liberalization over social issues. These types of 'biases' (a term that is meant purely in a descriptive, not a pejorative sense here) are difficult to identify if one only looks at the policies that are actively pursued in a political system. After all, if a political system is not receptive to certain claims or issues, they will not show up. Only by analyzing agendas and agenda-setting processes, and comparing them between political systems, does it become clear that a political system is structurally more receptive to some issues than to others.

Third, agendas are important as determinants of other (political) processes. Above, the impact of agendas on levels of enforcement and implementation was already mentioned. In another study, Mahoney (2007) showed that the agenda status of an issue affected the influence of interest groups on that issue: the more widespread the political and public attention for an issue, the less influence interest groups have. In these types of study, a focus on agendas adds to the (more common) focus on preferences (or interests), power, and institutions.

28.3 Key Insights from Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory has largely developed in the United States. Nevertheless, its main claims and insights have also proven highly relevant in a European context. In this section, I will outline the main general insights from the agenda-setting literature. In the next section, I will then turn to the adjustments that have been made in a European context.

Summarizing the literature on agenda-setting and the various theoretical approaches put forward in it, three main factors can be discerned that together shape agenda-setting processes: institutional frameworks, frames, and events. In addition, political activism and 'policy entrepreneurship' are important in bringing these factors together. This account largely builds on the work by Baumgartner and Jones (1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005) and Kingdon (1995), but seeks also to encompass much of the other work done on agenda-setting (e.g. by Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Cobb and Elder 1972; Cobb and Ross 1997; Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Schattschneider 1960).

28.3.1 Institutional Factors

Institutional factors are important because they define the rules of the game in agenda-setting. Because of the way they are organized, political systems are more receptive to some issues and arguments than others. This is the 'bias' that was referred to above. Because this bias is institutionalized, it makes it

more difficult for some actors to have their preferred issue considered than for others. In a contribution that is often seen as anticipating and paving the way for the later agenda-setting literature, Schattschneider (1960, 71) made this point in arguing that 'organization is the mobilization of bias.' By organizing institutional frameworks in a certain way, some issues are 'organized in' while others are 'organized out.'

Institutions matter in various ways. First, creating a certain organization or institutional venue creates an access point into the political system for actors and issues related to that organization's or venue's remit. Organizations often act as institutional advocates of certain issues. In that way, the creation or abolition of a government department and the portfolios of cabinet members, as well as the powers and resources they are allocated, have direct consequences for agenda-setting.

Second, institutional frameworks establish certain procedures, which may either facilitate or hinder raising certain issues, and which define the 'burden of proof' for actors wanting to bring up an issue or claim. For instance, the opportunities for private actors to bring cases to court and the scope of judicial review may offer opportunities for prospective agenda-setters (or for their opponents). Likewise, institutional characteristics of the political system (such as the number of parties, the existence of a majority, coalition or minority government, or the role of corporatist arrangement with interest groups) affect the chances of getting a certain issue on the agenda, as well as the strategies that are most likely to be effective.

In all these cases, institutional factors affect agenda-setting through two mechanisms: by shaping the opportunities for actors to participate in policy-making processes (and hence raise their concerns) and by affecting the types of issue and argument that the political system is receptive to. These are important elements in explaining differences in agendas and agenda-setting processes between different political systems.

28.3.2 Frames and Framing

Frames shape interpretations by highlighting certain (aspects of) issues over others, by giving normative standards against which to define 'problems' and by providing assumptions about whether and how things in reality are related (cf. Entman 1993, 52). The same issue can often be framed in multiple ways, each of which have different implications in terms of (a) whether political action should be taken and, if so, (b) what action should be taken. An important part of politics therefore consists of fights between competing frames and attempts by political actors to (re)frame issues in order to obtain support for their claims.

Framing is important in bringing issues to the political agenda (or keeping them off the agenda, depending on one's objectives). Most issues have different dimensions and can be approached from different angles. In agenda-setting processes, different sides of the debate emphasize different dimensions

and use different angles. For instance, nuclear energy can be seen as a threat to the environment and human safety or as crucial for safeguarding a stable and affordable energy supply (cf. Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 59ff.). In Germany, the former frame is dominant (and nuclear energy is not seen as a realistic option in energy policy), whereas in France the latter frame is dominant (and nuclear energy is an important part of energy policy).

Framing matters because most people (and policy-makers) value several things at the same time (in the case of nuclear energy: being safe from nuclear accidents and waste *and* benefiting from affordable energy). In those situations, whether people tend to support or oppose a claim largely depends on which of the dimensions is seen as most important or salient. As Entman (1993, 53) observed, framing works by 'highlight[ing] some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience.' In this way, by emphasizing one frame and downplaying another, political actors can sway the political debate in their direction.

Each policy (or decision not to pursue an active policy) is underpinned by a dominant frame that legitimates the course of action. In times of 'normal' policy-making around an issue, this frame is uncontested and there is little pressure to reform the policies. The policy (and the issue it deals with) is then low on the overall political agenda and is only given consideration by people working in that issue area on a daily basis. After all, when a policy is thought to work well, why should other political actors, the media, or the people at large pay attention to it?

Attempts to bring an issue to the agenda usually include (or even start with) a challenge to this dominant frame. By proposing an alternative frame, policies that seem to work well under the dominant frame may come to be seen in a negative light. If one succeeds in challenging the dominant understanding of an issue, opposition against the existing policy is likely to increase and the issue is likely to come onto the agenda.

In doing so, both opponents and defenders of a dominant frame will try to link their frame to important, more or less uncontested values in society. These may be values that have general appeal in Western countries, such as 'democracy,' 'liberty,' 'economic growth,' or 'sustainability.' But frames may also refer to values and historical experiences that are more specific for a society or political system. For instance, euthanasia is a taboo issue in German politics because it is associated with abuses in the Nazi era, while this historical experience (and the strong normative connotations it carries) does not play a role in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands (where euthanasia was legalized in 2002 and 2001, respectively).

Frames and institutions are linked because institutional frameworks make organizations or political systems as a whole more receptive to some types of frame and argument. A Department of Environment will only be receptive to issues if they can be framed as 'environmental' issues, while a Department of Economic Affairs will mainly be interested in issues that can be framed as contributing to economic growth and economic development.

28.3.3 Focusing Events

The third key factor in agenda-setting are focusing events (Kingdon 1995; see also Birkland 1997, 1998). Focusing events have a large impact on the political (and media and public) agenda because they put the spotlight on an issue that hitherto received less attention. A quintessential example are the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which suddenly made terrorism a much larger issue on agendas across the Western world than it had been before and led to an almost immediate flurry of anti-terrorism policies (as well as the US invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq).

In theoretical terms, what focusing events do is to highlight one issue (dimension) to the detriment of other, competing issues (or issue dimensions). Terrorism had been a problem in the years before 2001. In fact, Al Qaida, the organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks, had already committed a number of terrorist attacks in the 1990s. In the balance of things, however, terrorism did not seem a greater threat than many others, and Al Qaida was one among a range of terrorist groups. The 9/11 attacks changed this by (literally) making visible in one instance what terrorism actually meant when conducted in a Western country and by putting the spotlight on Al Qaida as the main terrorist group of the moment. It is one thing to know, hypothetically, that a terrorist attack may happen. It is quite another thing to see, on live television, the twin towers coming down after a terrorist attack. This turned a hypothetical possibility into a (highly threatening) reality.

The sheer concreteness and drama of the event made terrorism the key issue of the moment, blowing away competing issues and considerations, such as the protection of personal privacy and legal safeguards for those accused of terrorist activities. It was not that citizens and policy-makers no longer cared about these other considerations, but rather that they seemed less pressing, given the threat that terrorism was seen to pose. In that sense, a focusing event works the same way as reframing, except that a focusing event does so in a much quicker and more dramatic way.

Having said that, focusing events do not work of and by themselves. The impact of a focusing event depends crucially on the political context in which it is played out. In his study of responses to focusing events, Birkland (1997, 1998) showed that whether and how a focusing event has an impact on agendas depends on the type of event (whether it is caused by human or by natural causes) and whether there are organized political actors who can use the focusing event to press their case. As a result, focusing events have different effects in different domains.

The key point here is that focusing events become part of a political dynamic, and that their effect on agendas (and the ensuing policies) depend on those political dynamics (see also the chapters by Boin and Blondin on crisis management and by Resodihardjo on blame games in this volume). The meaning of a focusing event is hardly ever clear-cut: political actors can and do argue over the meaning of an event, its causes, and (hence) the best

response. In line with the political maxim that one should 'never waste a good crisis,' each actor will try to frame the event in a way that suits their political agenda (Boin et al. 2009).

For instance, after 9/11, it was debated whether this was an isolated event perpetrated by a small group of fanatics or a broader attack of 'islamic terrorism' on 'Western civilization.' The interpretation that is chosen obviously will have grave consequences for the subsequent course of action to be taken.

This is the case even when natural disasters, such as earthquakes, occur. They can be framed as 'acts of God' that no one could foresee, let alone prevent, or as human failures to mitigate the (more or less predictable) damage (for instance, by building stronger houses and providing for evacuation plans). For an issue to come onto the political agenda, some form of human agency needs to be included in the dominant understanding of the event. If not, there is little scope for governmental action and the political and governmental response will remain limited to emergency relief and collective mourning. As a result, the construction of 'causal stories' (Stone 1989) is a crucial part of the political struggle following crisis situations.

The role of focusing events makes agenda-setting unpredictable. Issues that have lingered in the lower reaches of the agenda for a long time may suddenly jump to prominence when a focusing event occurs. Conversely, long-term lobbies to establish an issue on the political agenda may become obsolete overnight because of a focusing event—as the German nuclear power lobby experienced when the Fukushima nuclear accident destroyed years of work to build up some sympathy for nuclear energy in German politics.

At the same time, the dynamics of focusing events and the way they are used by political actors in agenda-setting processes show a clear logic and can be explained in terms of agenda-setting theory. In doing so, the effects of focusing events are closely tied to the roles of framing and institutional frameworks that were discussed above.

28.3.4 Agenda-Setting and Political Agency

As much of the discussion above already showed, an important role in agenda-setting processes is played by political activism and entrepreneurship. One of the key insights of the agenda-setting literature is that agendas seldom 'happen' or 'occur,' but are produced by political and policy-making activism. A special role in the agenda-setting literature is played by Kingdon's (1995) 'policy entrepreneurs.' These are individuals who actively try to bring problems and solutions together when favorable political conditions exist, thereby creating a so-called 'window of opportunity' for a high agenda status (and policy change).

The combination of factors that produce political agendas, as well as the role of political agency, has at least two important consequences for

agenda-setting processes. First, agenda-setting is a complex and often erratic process, in which large shifts in attention can occur in relatively short periods of time. Although the dynamics of agenda-setting are well understood and agenda-setting processes can fruitfully be explained in terms of the agenda-setting literature, it is almost impossible to predict with any certainty which issues will be on top of a political agenda in, say, one year from now. Although agenda-setting processes can readily be predicted, the content of agendas cannot (cf. Jones and Baumgartner 2005, 113–116).

Second, despite the unpredictability of agenda-setting, there are systematic differences between agendas in different contexts. Different political systems respond differently to similar challenges and issues. A political system's agenda is largely shaped by specific (historical) traditions, which are reflected in institutional frameworks (who participates in policy processes in what ways?) and affect the appeal of political frames (which arguments, images, and symbols are considered plausible, attractive, and compelling?). This, in turn, affects the response to and interpretation of 'outside' events. Nevertheless, although our theoretical understanding of these differences is by now quite advanced, much work still needs to be done in terms of empirical comparisons between political systems. A vast area of research lies wide open in this regard.

28.4 From US Theories to European Practices

All classic authors on agenda-setting (Schattschneider, Bachrach and Baratz, Cobb and Elder, Kingdon, Baumgartner and Jones) come from the US and their work often relates directly to US experiences and debates. Although European scholars have increasingly studied agenda-setting processes in European contexts, they have done so by applying theories developed in a US context. If, as is argued in the introduction to this handbook, 'context matters,' this raises the question whether and how the dominant agenda-setting theories should be applied in Europe.

At an abstract level, the concepts and insights from (US) agenda-setting theory have proven fruitful in a European context as well, as was illustrated by some of the examples given above. The general logic of agenda-setting processes in terms of institutional frameworks, framing and focusing events, mediated by political activism, goes a long way towards explaining agenda-setting processes in a European context.

This is probably helped by the fact that many of the basic insights of agenda-setting theory are based on fundamental aspects of human cognition and organizational behavior. The existence of agendas and the importance of frames in focusing attention on some issues or issue dimensions both derive from the basic fact that humans and organizations have only limited capacities to process information and consider issues. As a result, Baumgartner et al. (2009), in a comparison of agendas in Belgium, Denmark, and the US,

found a similar pattern of attention allocation in the political system. Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson (2006) found that the development of overall levels of attention for health policy issues in Denmark and the US was similar in the two countries, despite important differences in political and health care systems.

Having said that, amendments are needed when more specific accounts of agenda-setting are to be given. This, however, is not just a matter of US–European differences, but also plays an important role in comparisons within Europe, as European states differ quite extensively in terms of political institutions and dominant understandings of particular issues. For now, neither has a 'European pattern' of agenda-setting been identified, nor has a typology of agenda-setting traditions in Europe (similar to the typology of administrative traditions developed by Painter and Peters and mentioned in the introduction to this volume) been developed.

Nevertheless, two specific contributions can be discerned in studies of agenda-setting in European states, which reflect common characteristics of most European national political systems. To begin with, the US literature is developed in a federal system with a strong separation of powers, leading to a multiplicity of what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) have called 'policy-making venues.' The multiplicity of venues has important consequences for agenda-setting because it multiplies the number of access points into the political agenda. Because venues compete for power and resources, they have incentives to search for new issues that they can use in that competition. This leads to a dynamic system, in which agenda-setters can actively go 'venue-shopping' in a search for a venue that is receptive to their concerns. At the same time, the multiplicity of venues also implies a multiplicity of potential veto points, which makes it more difficult to advance an issue once it is in the political system (Tsebelis 2002).

European countries, by contrast, are mostly unitary states (of course with notable exceptions) and operate under a parliamentary system of government with much more blurred distinctions between the legislative and executive branch. This tends to centralize power within the state, making it more difficult for outsiders to access the political system. Along these lines, Albaek et al. (2007) argued that the multiplicity of venues in the US facilitated the rise of the issue of tobacco consumption on the US political agenda, whereas it remained much lower on the agenda in the (single-venue) Danish system. Comparing attention for environmental issues in Denmark and the US, Green-Pedersen and Wolfe (2009) found that these issues were more easily picked up in the (multi-venue) US system, but that attention, once it was generated, was more strongly institutionalized in the Danish system.

As a second contribution, studies of agenda-setting in European states have highlighted the importance of party competition, a factor that is absent from much of the US agenda-setting literature. In a series of studies on the issues of immigration in Denmark and Sweden (Green-Pedersen

and Krogstrup 2008), euthanasia in Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands (Green-Pedersen 2007), and tobacco control in Denmark and the US (Albaek et al. 2007), Green-Pedersen and collaborators developed the argument that the rise of issues in European parliamentary systems crucially depends on the extent to which the issue can be made part of the existing pattern of party competition. When parties have no incentive to raise an issue, because it does not fit into dominant conflict lines in the political system, the issue will remain low on the agenda. Whereas US studies tend to stress the role of interest groups, these studies add political parties as key players.

Whether this stems from differences between the US and European political systems or from differences in intellectual traditions in the two countries remains to be seen. In his quantitative comparison of agenda dynamics in Denmark, Germany, the UK, and the US, Breunig (2006) finds a significant effect of partisan preferences in the US over time. Based on this, he urges US scholars to 'tak[e] partisan preferences more explicitly into account' (Ibid.: 1081). This suggests that intellectual traditions may play a role in accounting for the differences in the European and US literatures, alongside differences in political systems.

Suggestive though these studies are, much more work needs to be done. So far only a few comparative studies have been done, which include a limited number of (mostly North-West European) states and have been carried out by a small number of (very active) scholars (see the references above). If we are to reach firmer conclusions about the differences between European states and the US, as well as between European states, more systematic comparisons, including more countries, are required.

28.5 From Domestic Agenda-Setting to European Agenda-Setting

Agenda-setting in Europe nowadays includes not only its various states, but also the European Union. Since the early 2000s, agenda-setting in the EU has become a subject of study in its own right in the academic literature. This is not the place to give a comprehensive review of this literature; that has been done elsewhere (see Princen 2016). Here, the focus will be on the relevance of the EU and the process of European integration for understanding agenda-setting in Europe more broadly.

The key element (and theoretical concept) in this regard is the development of a system of multilevel governance in Europe (Bache and Flinders 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2001[2]). The rise of the EU has added a new layer of government above national states (and their subnational units). Characteristic for multi-level governance is that there is no clear separation between layers of government, but that issues are dealt with at multiple levels at the same time. These various levels represent multiple venues for agenda-setting, which gives rise to processes of venue-shopping between the member states and the European level (Princen 2009).

Since policy-making at the EU and member state levels is strongly intertwined, agendas at the two levels affect each other. Scholars have analyzed processes in which (actors from) member states try to 'upload' issues and ideas to the EU level (Héritier 1996: 151ff). The dynamics of venue-shopping in the EU and the role this plays in bringing issues onto the EU agenda have therefore been an important theme in the literature on EU agenda-setting (see e.g. Beyers and Kerremans 2012; Guiraudon 2000).

Studies of Europeanization have shown how EU policies affect member state policies (see the chapter by Mastenbroek and Heidbreder in this volume). Most of these studies look at the way in which substantive policies are affected by EU policies and legislation. Much less is known about whether the EU has an impact on the attention for issues at the domestic level, thereby affecting domestic agendas rather than domestic legislation or policies. Anecdotal evidence suggests it does, but a systematic understanding of these dynamics is still lacking.

The two (uploading and downloading) processes come together in studies of venue-shopping strategies by political actors. These strategies often take (or at least: are intended to take) the form of what Keck and Sikkink (1998) have called the 'boomerang effect': if political actors feel that governments at the international level are more receptive to their concerns than their domestic government, they may bring their cause to the international level in order to put pressure on their domestic government. This happened, for instance, in the 1970s, when UK women's rights groups, which had run up against conservative political elites in their own country, targeted the EU in order to effect changes in the position of women in the UK (Mazey 1998).

As was the case for comparisons between countries in Europe, research into the interaction of EU and domestic agendas is still in its early stages. Some preliminary attempts to look at this interaction in a more systematic way have been made (see e.g. Princen et al. 2009), but more needs to be done both conceptually and empirically before we can arrive at more encompassing and better-grounded conclusions.

Linked to this are a number of important questions about the potential impact of the EU and the process of European integration on agenda-setting that are still open to speculation at the moment, such as:

- Are agendas becoming more similar across European countries? If policies and political processes are coming together under the influence of European integration, one may assume they do. However, no systematic evidence for this exists at the time.
- Is agenda-setting (and policy-making more generally) becoming more technocratic as a result of the EU? At the EU level, popular politics plays a smaller role than at the domestic level. If the EU is exerting greater influence on domestic agendas, does this also imply a smaller role for popular politics in domestic agenda-setting?

- Are we moving toward a European public sphere, in which public agendas are growing together? This is the subject of a separate literature, but one that has important implications for agenda-setting as well. The absence of a European public sphere is an important reason for the limited (direct) impact of public opinion on EU agenda-setting. With the rise of a European public sphere, if such a rise takes place, this may change.
- What are the implications of agenda-setting in a multi-level political system such as the EU? Does it become more like the US or will the EU's institutional set-up and political realities continue to set it apart?

With these questions, we arrive at the frontier of the European agenda-setting literature. They offer a fertile agenda for future research, and one that is crucial if we are to understand how the EU is developing and what impact that has on the functioning of politics and policy-making in Europe.

28.6 Looking Forward: A European Research Agenda for Agenda-Setting?

On the basis of this assessment of the existing literature, a number of important and promising avenues for further research can be identified. To begin with, it is important to develop more systematic comparisons between agenda-setting processes in different countries. Comparative studies of agenda-setting have started to appear, but their number is still limited. Insofar as comparisons have been attempted, they have focused on countries in North-Western Europe and the US. For more comprehensive and wide-ranging comparisons within Europe, it is important also to include Southern, Central and Eastern European countries in these comparisons. By doing so, we may hope to answer a number of important questions, such as:

- Are there different styles of agenda-setting in Europe?
- Are they converging towards a common model or not?
- Does agenda-setting in Europe differ from that in other (democratic) countries? Are the similarities greater than the differences?

As a second line of research, it would be worthwhile to set up more studies of multi-level agenda-setting, which look at the interaction between domestic and European agendas. Depending on the issues at stake, such studies could also include the interaction of these agendas with local, regional, and global agendas. Important questions to address include:

- Who is driving whom? Are domestic agendas determined by European agendas or vice versa (or both, but then how)?

- Can we observe differences in this regard between different EU member states?
- What are the implications of this in terms of the way policies are made in Europe?

Finally, as a precondition for both lines of research sketched above, a more careful operationalization of agendas and the agenda status of issues as well as a more careful use of theoretical concepts and propositions is needed. Many key concepts from agenda-setting theory, such as 'window of opportunity,' 'policy entrepreneur,' 'focusing event,' and 'venue shopping' have found their way into the broader literature, as short-hand labels for often-observed phenomena. However, in using these terms, they are often detached from their theoretical backgrounds and used in a loose and suggestive rather than a precise and theoretically informed way. This has hindered cumulative empirical work and theoretical development, as has recently been observed in systematic reviews of the multiple streams approach (Cairney and Jones 2016; Jones et al. 2016). If we are to advance our understanding of agenda-setting, in Europe and beyond, greater awareness of and more precise use of these theoretical concepts is needed.

Notes

1. This is usually measured through surveys that include a question about 'the most important problem(s)' currently facing the respondent's country.
2. In principle, this is only the case for the member states of the EU. In practice, however, the impact of the EU extends beyond its members and the situation is more diverse. A number of European states are affected by the EU through their membership of the European Economic Area (in which a large part of EU legislation is in force) or specific agreements. As a result, some states, such as Norway, are deeply implicated in the EU's governance system, even though they are not formally members of the EU. Other non-member states have applied for EU membership and are gradually adopting EU legislation and being integrated into the EU governance system. For yet other states, which are neither members of the EEA nor candidates for EU membership, the level of involvement is lower. The future position of the UK after leaving the EU is as yet unclear, but will probably include several links to the EU as well.

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