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The Comparative Agendas Project

Intellectual Roots and Current Developments

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1.1 Roots and Goals of the Comparative Agendas Project

In compiling research for their 1993 book *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones developed a very simple methodology for tracking the attention of media and government institutions to particular issues: code a minimum of information for every activity on a particular topic. They looked at a total of over 22,000 media stories and over 6,500 congressional hearings in tracing attention to nuclear power, pesticides, and other topics (see Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, Appendix A). The key methodological innovation was to use public indices (at the time, published annual volumes such as the *New York Times Index* or the Congressional Information Service annual abstracts of congressional hearings) and to record the date as well as a minimum of additional information about each issue. Rather than closely analyze the entire article or document, they simply looked at the title or abstract. If the key issue is how much attention is being directed at an issue, and if the attention reflects enthusiasm or criticism, then traditional “deep reading” of the text was not needed. Plus, if the goal is to look at long-term trends over several decades, these broad patterns should emerge, complementing the deeper chronological histories other scholars may have completed. They found that student coders could quickly be trained to record such basic information quickly and accurately. Immediately on finishing the book, the two put forward an audacious proposal to the US National Science Foundation: create a database of all US congressional hearings from 1947 through the present, comprehensively documenting the congressional agenda and making it possible to track the rise and fall of every issue on the

congressional agenda over more than forty years. The proposal was rejected on the grounds of being impossible.

Thirty years later we are glad to note that not only is that original idea now a reality, but that the simple idea of creating an infrastructure for research on the history and dynamics of public attention to all activities of government has become widely accepted. The US Policy Agendas Project (PAP) now makes available records of over one million government activities from all branches of the US federal government, and we recognize the support of the National Science Foundation for making much of this possible. The project is now an important part of the comparative study of public policy, as the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) makes available similar data for over a dozen countries.

Christoffer Green-Pedersen of the University of Aarhus was the first to create an agendas project outside of the United States, doing so for his native Denmark after an extensive stay at the University of Washington in the early 2000s. Baumgartner was a visiting professor in 2004–5 in Italy and France, spending significant time visiting colleagues in various European countries just as *The Politics of Attention* (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005) was about to be released. Stefaan Walgrave, well integrated into a separate international community interested in the study of social movements and protest, had already begun a large data collection project for Belgium that he was able to adapt to the CAP standards, recognizing the value of comparable data. By the mid-2000s, a number of CAP-focused projects were underway, and major funding was made available through the European Science Foundation to support several of them (see Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014). As we write, there are agendas projects in over a dozen countries ranging from Hong Kong to Central and Western Europe, Canada, Australia, for some US states, with the US project being the most established in time, but the center of gravity now clearly in Western Europe where the bulk of the scholars focusing on comparative agendas studies now reside.

In 2016 the CAP went online with a single integrated website allowing users to download datasets and information from many of the associated projects and to analyze the data online in an easy interactive user-interface. Previously, only the US Policy Agendas Project had such a high functioning website. The new comparative site will be continuously updated with new databases, greater time coverage, and more countries as the project continues to expand.

As Green-Pedersen and Walgrave wrote in the introduction to their 2014 edited volume, the CAP is united by data, not by theory. The vision that brings us together is that political science, and comparative studies of public policy in particular, will be moved forward by the common use of large infrastructure projects that make possible the types of comparative research that many would like to do, but previously could not undertake because the questions demanded data of a scope and reach that was not available. Political science,

we believe, has too long worked following a “lone scholar” model. While the solitary scholar working alone can have many insights, the discipline can also benefit from teams of scholars that share their research efforts to create a research infrastructure larger than any single scholar, or small group of collaborators, could envision. Contributing to a shared infrastructure need not preclude continued independent work on one’s own, of course. So we have sought to create a large network of scholars contributing to something perhaps bigger than any of us need for our individual research, but by working with just a few common elements, we coordinate our efforts and seamlessly generate something collective, even while each individual scholar or small national group can continue on their particular research tracks. Other scholarly disciplines have certainly benefitted from collective projects, often discipline-wide ones, such as mapping the human genome, the construction of mega-infrastructure projects such as massive particle accelerators, space- or mountain-based telescopes, or other data collection or observational projects of use to hundreds or thousands of scholars within a given field. Closer to our own discipline, the American National Election Studies, the General Social Survey, and the Eurobarometer constitute such shared infrastructure. The Correlates of War project serves as such a thing within the field of international relations.

A key element in the CAP is to generate a shared data resource without imposing constraints on its use. Such constraints could be methodological or theoretical. We strive to reduce any such constraints: there are no restrictions on the use of our databases, as they are distributed over open websites. Similarly, whereas Baumgartner and Jones focused substantially on a theoretical perspective drawn from punctuated equilibrium, there is no reason why a study using the underlying data from the larger project would necessarily draw from this (or any other) theory. Indeed, in Green-Pederson and Walgrave’s (2014) edited volume drawing from the CAP, “punctuated equilibrium” appears in the index only once: to refer to the part of the introduction where the editors explain that none of the contributions to the volume draw from it (2014: 3–4).

Perhaps the only shared methodological point that scholars using CAP data would need to have in common is a desire to base their analysis on a systematic review of what governments do. Beyond that, the data can be used by themselves to study such things as the interplay between media coverage and parliamentary debate, or they can be used as a starting point, for example as a means of identifying all activities or documents on a given topic (say, endangered species protection), permitting the scholar to do a more in-depth analysis of that topic by reading those primary sources and developing further qualitative or quantitative indicators going beyond what is made available on the CAP website. Our goal is to promote, facilitate, and subsidize new research, including research that goes well beyond the data we make available. By making it

available, we hope to raise the floor for all scholars, allowing them to start from a base much higher than if we had not created the CAP, and allowing them to envision projects that are much more systematic and larger in scope. This ambition includes encouraging international comparisons where previously many projects would have been done within a single country.

A defining characteristic of the CAP is that our policy topic categories are focused on issues, not left–right positions. We concentrate on issues for two reasons. First, we care about the allocation of attention. Governments can't identify and tackle all problems at the same time. Hence, we are interested in when certain issues are addressed and which ones are ignored. Second and most importantly, we cannot determine, except by forcing some outside value structure on a given issue, which position is “left” and which is “right” on many policy topics. Consider a bill to set a minimum wage of some amount; this would seem a bill motivated from the political left. But what if the bill actually replaces a higher amount with a lower one? What if the bill increases the minimum wage but adds flexibility for employers to dismiss workers? Our point is that without deep knowledge of the political context, even a bill as central to the traditional left–right dimension as one relating to worker wage regulation could be difficult to classify. When we consider that our goal is to classify every activity of government, including professional regulation, but also water infrastructure, health research, and other topics that do not correspond to the traditional left–right cleavage structure at all, it is clear that we cannot expect to classify every activity by political position. However, we do know who is the speaker or the sponsor of the activity (for example, any parliamentary question is associated with the Member of Parliament or a political party sponsoring the question), so we can often infer the position by the speaker. But we never impose in our coding system any assumption that a statement or an activity by an actor of the left is necessarily a leftist action; that is an empirical question. Another reason why we do not categorize activities within the CAP by “directionality” is that the left and the right positions on various issues can change over time. In any case, the need for deep historical and contextual knowledge about individual issues during particular time periods suggested to us at the very beginning of the CAP (and even before, in the US-based Policy Agendas Project), that we should code systematically by policy topic, not by partisan or ideological directionality, and we have remained true to this philosophy throughout the creation of all the databases that constitute the CAP. Its focus on policy however, does not preclude researchers to combine measures of attention based on CAP data with directional measures as Adams (2016) suggests. Similar to measures of policy mood (Stimson et al., 1995), researcher might also employ CAP data for recovering the dimensions and positions of a particular political space (see Breunig et al. (2016) for legislation).

Similar to our decision not to incorporate ideological positions into our coding, we have also not coded frames or issue-definitions. When Baumgartner and Jones (1993) studied pesticides or nuclear power, they coded activities by whether they promoted or criticized the industry in question, a crude indicator of framing. But when they expanded their study to all congressional hearings as the PAP was beginning, they discovered, as discussed in the previous paragraph with regards to ideology, that they could not impose a consistent definition of framing without making unwarranted assumptions. So framing, like ideological position, is a topic dear to the hearts and concerns of many of the scholars who participate in (indeed, who designed) the CAP (e.g., Baumgartner et al., 2008), but one that is not systematically incorporated into the publicly available databases. As it requires close contextual knowledge, it needs to be added on, typically by a scholar or team with an interest in a particular question. For example, several scholars have looked at abortion, stem-cell research, and other morality issues by starting with CAP databases on those topics in several countries, then developing issue-specific definitions of the various positions or frames on the issue (see Engeli et al., 2012).

While the CAP does not code by frame or by directionality, we encourage scholars to do so. Indeed, a main motivation of the project is to subsidize or make possible research projects on diverse topics, allowing scholars to start with our data and add anything else to them. For certain topics, it would indeed be feasible to add directionality codes to the items we identify, to code them by policy frame, or to add other codes of theoretical interest. We could not feasibly do so for the entire universe, so we have left it to others to share in that work. This is not because many of us involved in the CAP are not interested in those topics; it is purely a matter of feasibility and scope. In smaller-scope projects not covering the entire range of public policies, these constraints might not apply. We look forward to seeing the studies that might result.

1.2 Using Agendas to Study Public Policy across and within Nations

The CAP today covers an increasing number of countries and agendas. As the number of country projects increased the original goals and ambitions also changed. The first central change is clearly the move towards comparative research. Comparative research on public policy is strongly dependent on the availability and comparability of data. Most of this data is compiled by international organizations, such as the OECD, on topics as diverse as pensions, healthcare, education, unemployment etc. While there have been attempts, of course, to combine research into different areas, this endeavor has usually

proven difficult. The comparison of welfare states is probably the area where most large-scale comparative research has taken place across a set of neighboring policies. Beyond welfare states, large-scale comparisons have suffered from the focus on government *spending*. Alternatively, the OECD collects certain performance indicators for health or education that are used extensively in comparative research on policymaking. The development of indicators such as those of the “PISA” survey on education certainly represent an important improvement.

CAP is making a contribution at several levels. Initially most of the national CAP projects drew their inspirations from the US policy agendas project. Several projects examined their newly collected data in an analysis over time for an individual data series or single question within the country of interest (for example, Mortensen, 2010; Walgrave and Vliegenthart, 2010; Brouard et al., 2014; John and Jennings, 2010). Due to the common interest in agenda-setting, those projects insisted early, at least since 2007, on a certain degree of coordination regarding the topic codes, agendas to code and coding techniques and protocols. As Shaun Bevan explains in Chapter 2 of this volume, this coordination has increased over time. The launching of the common website has, moreover, set the pace for recoding existing agendas where necessary to comply with the common CAP Master Codebook. The original goal of these coordination efforts clearly has been to facilitate comparative research, but effective comparative research has become possible only recently. The first comparative contributions of CAP have for instance provided a more in-depth assessment of the evolution of spending priorities over time and across countries (Breunig, 2011). Since then, contributions have covered very different topics regarding the contents of executive speeches (Jennings et al., 2011), the media (Vliegenthart et al., 2016), or parliamentary questions (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). An extension of indicators of government activity made it possible to examine a more diverse set of policy fields and also contribute to various fields of research in comparative politics.

Beyond new agendas, the CAP should allow for cross-country comparison in new policy fields. CAP data will, moreover, allow study of those areas that lack both budgetary or performance indicators. Virtually any policy can be compared with regard to timing, relative attention, and, possibly subject to some recoding or additional coding, the type of reforms or attention that was adopted, as illustrated by comparative work on “morality” issues and policies (see Engeli et al., 2012).

CAP data also allows for the study of policy dynamics. The long-term evolution of aggregate agendas can be compared across political systems. Doing so enables researchers to explore reactions to common problems or shocks (Gourevitch, 1986). Long time series data on public policies opens up a host of new research questions that have been studied in case-study research

in public policy, but that may now be studied in large-n comparisons. This type of inquiry includes the role of elections and electoral calendars, for instance. We may study the consequences of elections on agenda-setting and policy change. Studies on individual countries, such as France (Baumgartner et al., 2009) or the United Kingdom (Bevan and Jennings, 2014) have tended to show the rather limited impact of elections, which contrast to some findings in comparative politics (e.g., List and Sturm, 2006; Rogoff and Sibert, 1988) but comparative research should shed more light on this question. Similarly, the proximity of election is likely to favor attention to certain issues more than others.

Another element regarding agenda dynamics concerns the size and diversity of the agenda itself. The substantive content of the agenda, as well as its macro-characteristics can be analyzed in a way not previously possible. Baumgartner and Jones' 2005 *Politics of Attention* analyzed the way in which attention evolved over time and how it spread from just a few core issues to many other policy domains. CAP data will help to compare country-specific agenda dynamics and also understand whether there are common dynamics across countries regard the size or the diversity of agenda-setting. For example, Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson (2006) show that the evolution of health policy is strikingly similar across two very different institutional contexts, namely the United States and Denmark. In an early study of policy processes, across three countries, Baumgartner et al., (2009: 619) conclude that "in the democracies we studied, the effects of the policy process dominate the country effects." Instead of focusing on institutional differences across countries and their consequences, these studies suggest that a fruitful avenue for future work would be to examine if various policy domains are organized differently across countries and if these organizational differences can still produce similar outcomes. Studying multiple policy domains across polities at the same time requires demanding research designs. The CAP database can ease this burden considerably by offering a unified inventory of all policy areas within a large set of countries.

A different type of question concerns the possible correlations and interactions across national agendas. For instance, scholars have observed that certain types of "moral issues", e.g., related to genetically modified food, cloning, and other similar concerns have emerged on national policy agendas more or less at the same time. While this partly responds to scientific discoveries, there other forces at work. The diffusion of policy ideas across borders may explain some of these developments, while political traditions and the structure of the party system may account for continuing differences in the political treatment of such kind of questions (see Engeli et al., 2012). The possibilities for further research in this area are certainly very important. Hypotheses on policy learning, diffusion, the power of ideas and related

questions should be put to the test, thanks to the consolidation of CAP data. This data may also help us identify first movers or pace-setters more easily, as solutions developed in some countries progressively spread to other countries. We may also consider at greater length the importance of EU legislation and the degree of “Europeanization” of national legislation in EU member states (for example, Brouard et al., 2012).

When considering all its components within and across countries, the CAP database is unique in its design. To our knowledge, it is the first dataset that makes it easy to study policymaking along four dimensions: along the policy cycle, across policy domains, among at least a dozen countries, and over long periods of time. This richness and flexibility can serve policy specialists as a sophisticated index for initiating a topic-specific research project more easily. For example, one can easily identify various legislative activities ranging from hearings to lawmaking on healthcare in the United States in the 1990s (Hacker, 1999). It also can serve for offering a broad overview of long-term patterns of policy change. These can indeed be assessed within the confines of the project and not just using it as a starting point. Vliegenthart et al. (2016) employ CAP data from six Western European countries in order to explore how heightened media coverage of protests on a particular policy issue leads to parliamentary questioning on that issue. The authors make clear that certain political opportunity structures, such as majoritarian democracy, enhance protestors’ ability to place a particular issue on the political agenda. Both examples, a qualitative study of a particular reform proposal in the United States and a quantitative study of all protests in six European democracies, showcase the wealth of data and the versatility of its usage.

1.3 Comparative Policy Agendas as a Field of Study

The trends and perspectives apparent in the study of agendas are becoming increasingly diverse. While most of the original research focused on intra- or inter-agenda dynamics, a lot of work was interested in understanding the consequences of agenda-setting for policy outputs. As we have seen, this diversification of research goals, strategies, and objects is a central feature of the CAP. As the project expanded to new countries, it also expanded to new research communities and questions. While our goal is not to define the emerging field of study, we can identify a certain number of directions that have emerged in recent CAP-based work.

The study of agenda dynamics remains a goal in itself. Even though research has moved away from the study of punctuated equilibrium and the distribution of attention more generally, intra- and inter-agenda dynamics remain a central feature of CAP. The existence of multiple parallel CAP-coded agendas

allows for fine-tuned studies of the interdependence of different agendas and their evolution. This is the case for, instance for studies on media effects on the parliamentary agenda (Vliegthart et al., 2016) or on the influence of social movements on either the media or the government (Hutter and Vliegthart, 2016). The study by Froio et al. (2016) studies the interaction of party agendas with present and future problem flows. These examples illustrate how the CAP may eventually contribute to a much better understanding of processes in other fields of study, thanks to its research infrastructure.

A second trend is thus also that CAP has moved away from study of bills or adopted laws as its main objects of study: social movements, party platforms or media are now regularly studied by CAP researchers. And while these objects, of course, are part of large separate and autonomous strands of literature, the fact that they have been integrated into the CAP frameworks opens up new opportunities to study them within new research designs. For the study of parties, for instance, CAP research has allowed for new perspectives concerning the study of issue ownership and related party strategies (e.g., Tresch et al., 2015).

One of the most important recent directions adds to existing work on responsiveness and the quality of democracy. As for the studies of parties, media, or social movements, this field possesses a lively research tradition of its own that has produced an increasing amount of original research and results. Again, the combination of multiple agendas may open up new perspectives, ask new questions and generate original results. The concentration on policy areas may show a diversity of relationships between, say media, public opinion, and political institutions. So far most work has tended to assume a stable relationship across all policy areas. This assumption, common in institution-based studies, stands in stark contrast to the traditions in policy studies, where entire literatures often focus on given policy domains, such as pensions, health-care, defense, foreign policy, or trade. Even a cursory look at recent conference papers within the CAP community or among the wider group of researchers using CAP data illustrates the importance of this new direction, seeking to show systematically the importance not only of institutional structures, but also the peculiarities of individual policy domains.

1.4 The Current State of the CAP Infrastructure

The developments explained above have become possible thanks to a greatly expanded wealth of data that is now mostly stocked on the new CAP website. Table 1.1 summarizes all available data from three levels of political system: the European Union, eighteen countries, and two US states. The table lists nine common series ranging from policy inputs such as public opinion to policy outputs including laws and budgets. It becomes immediately apparent

Table 1.1. Current datasets of the Comparative Policy Agendas Project

Political system	Public opinion	Media	Courts	Government speeches	Party platforms	Parliamentary questions	Bills	Laws	Budgets
European Union	2003–16					1994–2001 ^a	1994–2001 ^b	1975–2014 ^c	
Australia	1992–2013	1996–2013	1903–2016	1945–2013		1980–2013	1966–2015	1966–2015	
Belgium ^d	1999–2008	1999–2008		1992–2008	1978–2008	1988–2010	1988–2010	1988–2010	
Canada ^e	1987–2009			1960–2009		1982–2004	1960–2010		
Croatia ^f		1990–2015			1990–2015	1992–2015	1990–2015	1990–2015	
Denmark ^g		1984–2003		1953–2013	1953–2011	1953–2013	1953–2013	1953–2013	1953–2013
France ^h		1981–2013	1951–2009		1981–2012	1996–2010	1974–2013	1978–2013	
Germany	1986–2005			1976–2005	1976–2005	1976–2005	1976–2005	1976–2005	
Hungary		2010–14			1990–2010	1990–2014		1990–2014	1991–2013
Israel ⁱ								1948–2014	
Italy				1979–2014	1983–2008	1997–2014		1983–2013	1990–2012
Netherlands ^j		1990–2008		1945–2015	1981–2012	1984–2009	1981–2009	1981–2009	
New Zealand			2004–15			2008–11			
Portugal				2002–11	1995–2011	2003–15			
Spain	1993–2015	1995–2015		1982–2015	1982–2000	1978–2015	1977–2015	1980–2015	
Switzerland ^k		1996–2012					1978–2008	1978–2008	
Turkey	2003–13	1995–2003			2002–11	1991–2011	2002–13	2002–13	1841–2016
United Kingdom ^l	1944–2016	1980–2005		1983–2007	1983–2008	1998–2008	1911–2016	1911–2016	1911–2007
United States ^m	1947–2012	1960–2008		1911–2016	1948–2008	1947–2013 ⁿ	1948–2014	1948–2014	1947–2015
State of Florida		1946–2013	1945–2009	1946–2016				1989–2015	
State of Pennsylvania ^o	1994–2017	1989–2015		1979–2017		1979–2010 ^p	1979–2014	1979–2014	1979–2014

Notes: ^a Council Conclusions (laws), 1995–2014; Council Working group meetings, European Commission Documents ^b Council Working group meetings 1995–2014. ^c European Commission Documents 1995–2014. ^d Additionally: Coalition agreements 1978–2008. ^e Also: 1960–2009 intergovernmental meetings. ^f Government Weekly sessions 1990–2015. ^g Plus three series on local political agenda. ^h Also Government communications and decrees 1974–2013. ⁱ Regulations 1948–2014 and Cabinet Decisions 2003–16. ^j Coalition agreements 1963–2012; some agency publications 1990–2006; local coalition agreements 1986–2014; policy agendas of think tanks related to political parties 2000–11; introductory section to the budget of the minister of the interior 1985–2008; EU COM proposals EU-directives and changes to directives 1974–2007. ^k Direct Democracy 1848–2014. ^l Public opinion, Scotland (“most important issue”), Bills/Acts of Scottish Parliament, Hearings of Committees of Scottish Parliament 1998–2007, Reports of Select Committees of UK Parliament 1997–2014; Statutory Instruments of UK Parliament 1987–2008; Prorogation Speech 1975–2016. ^m Roll Calls 1947–2013; Executive Orders 1945–2015; Interest Groups 1966–2001. ⁿ Congressional hearings. ^o Executive Orders 1979–2008; Legislative Service Agency Reports 1979–2009; General Fund Balance 1979–2014. ^p Hearings.

Source: Comparative Agendas Project

that the loose network structure is consequential for data collection and availability. For most systems, laws and some form of legislative inquiry (i.e., hearings or parliamentary questions) have been coded. For more than half of the entities, information on media (albeit in different formats), government speeches, party platforms, and bills are accessible. Public opinion, budgets, and Supreme Court decisions are among the more fragmented data series. The time frame of each data series also fluctuates among projects. While most of the British data goes back to the early twentieth century, the most frequent coverage starts in the early 1990s. This is obviously true for the Eastern European cases, but also holds for most EU-related series. Variability in data coverage for each political system has multiple reasons, including researchers' own interests and resources as well as simple data availability. For example, data on most important problems surveys only became publicly available in the last three decades and in a limited number of countries with an established survey industry.

The codebook is highly adaptable to a diverse set of political activities that can be classified by policy content. The summary table also highlights how many different activities have been coded in addition to the nine core series. These include, for example, working group meetings of the European Union Council. Several European countries added coalition agreements, referenda as a direct democratic tool in Switzerland, executive orders and regulatory action by bureaucracies, as well as policy agendas or mission statements from think tanks and interest groups. The plethora of applications indicates the wide utility and versatility of the underlying coding scheme.

1.5 Structure of the Book

This book is divided into three parts. The two remaining chapters of Part 1 provide overviews of the entire CAP project. Chapters in Part 2 give information related to individual country-based projects—the databases and time periods covered, data sources, institutional context, and so on. Each short chapter in this section also provides an illustration of a country-specific question that can be addressed with the project's data. Part 3 includes comparative and analytical chapters including cross-national studies using CAP data. These are by no means exhaustive, but the selection of chapters provides a series of illustrations of relevant questions that can be addressed.

In Chapter 2, Shaun Bevan introduces the specifics of data retrieval and coding within the CAP. The chapter explains that the CAP emerged out of a loose network structure among scholars with related but diverse interests. The common ground is a desire to classify political agendas according to the policies they address. Based on voluntary coordination, a group of roughly a

dozen country project teams settled on a common coding scheme that made it possible to include national particularities and still ensure cross-national comparison. A concerted effort by Bevan and individual project team leaders enabled the creation of a Master Codebook. Another challenge of the collective endeavor is to figure out what types of government activities are employed and what records are publicly available. On that basis, most countries in the CAP were able to collect data throughout all stages of the policy process, ranging from public opinion and media, to parliamentary process, such as speeches and interpellation, to bills and laws. Depending on researchers' interests, these core series are supplemented with additional data, e.g., on courts or interest groups. Indeed, it is possible to apply the basic coding scheme to a variety of political settings ranging from authoritarian regimes to international organizations. Bevan concludes his chapter by showing the descriptive power of the existing online database and stating some limitations of the CAP data.

Chapter 3 by Stefaan Walgrave and Amber Boydstun narrates how the research topics and design of the CAP community have evolved over time. The two authors assemble all the abstracts of papers presented at CAP conferences in the last ten years in order to canvass the collective work. Over ten conferences more than 250 papers have been presented by over 200 authors. The authors show how diverse the group is. The papers used thirteen different agenda series covering many political processes. In fact, the most often studied agenda involved mass media (23 percent) but several other series follow closely. At least half the papers related two or more series with each other. This design suggests that many CAP papers are interested in how political processes interact with each other. The most apparent connection are studies of responsiveness and representation. Because of the steady evolution of the network, the predominant research design entails a one-country study of changes in a political agenda over time. But even these studies are typically comparative because they consider agenda-setting across all policy fields. All in all, the chapter indicates that the CAP data has been applied to a wide range of political science research and that comparative research using it has been flourishing, a trend that should accelerate now that the CAP data are mostly available online.

Part 2 of the book provides descriptive elements for all CAP projects. Each chapter sketches out the main features of the political system and how agendas are generated in those systems. The chapters outline agendas data at three levels of governance: supra-national (European Union), national (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States), and sub-national (Florida and Pennsylvania). The diversity of institutional and political setting is quite broad and range from democratic to semi-democratic, presidential to parliamentary, and from unitary to federal systems. Within these different institutional settings a large

array of political activities occurs. Moreover, the institutional rules for employing these activities sometimes change over time. Electoral reforms in Italy or New Zealand are well known, but parliamentary rules, such as agenda-setting procedures or structures of debate, also change quite frequently (Sieberer et al., 2016). Providing detailed descriptions of the institutional setting for each agenda series therefore enables scholars to assess the possibility of cross-case comparison of political activities and policies.

Part 3 highlights the analytical advantages of using CAP data. The chapters demonstrate a variety of approaches and usages of the data, while all feature cross-country and longitudinal analyses. Papers illustrate various possible uses for areas as diverse as media, social movements, parties, lawmaking, speeches etc. The chapters also exemplify different types of methodological approaches, ranging from qualitative research to very sophisticated multivariate regression designs and time-series analysis. Those chapters summarize or illustrate existing research, while suggesting new research directions and possibilities. Our concluding chapter then assesses some of the future possibilities of the CAP, in particular how it relates with other large research projects prominent on the international scene.

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