

# About the Comparative Agenda Project

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## History

- The seminal work of Baumgartner and Jones about USA
- The will to compare the American case to european ones
- The will to several european teams to set an exhaustive program of data collection and data analysis about their own countries
- The need for rigorous study of the europeanization process by doing a comparison between european countries and with EU

## The teams

- USA
- Canada
- Denmark
- Belgium
- UK
- France
- The Netherlands
- Spain
- Italy
- Germany
- Switzerland
- EU
- And new teams in Europe but also in China...

## What is about ?

- The Policy Agendas Project **collects and organizes data** from various archived sources **to trace changes in the policy agenda and public policy outcomes** since the Second World War in USA and 1978 at least in Europe.
- Policymaking activity in each dataset is coded according to the same [policy](#)

[content coding system](#), making it possible to compare the policy processes of over five decades and over countries.

- There are **19 major topic categories** (agriculture, health care, energy, environment, defense, international affairs, etc.) and each of these is further subdivided into more detailed subtopics for **a total of 226 subtopics** in all.

## Aims of the project:

- First, to trace government and public attention to issues over time. Initially, the focus is about the **dynamics of public policy in national context**. Why and under which logics are there shifts in attention ?
- Second, to study the policy attention and outcomes between polities. So our aim is also **to study institutions stressing on their outputs**. Why do the agenda and the responsiveness of an institution (legislature) vary between political systems ?

## The challenges

- To set up a really comparative project: so we need to be able to cover the **same dimensions in a variety of institutional settings**.
- To get data in the **same format** about the **same object**, the agenda, with the **same coding scheme**.
- To be able to **get a growing amount of data and to code them**.

The core of the comparative agenda project relies on 8 levels of data collection

- Laws.
- Parliamentary activity.
- Executive activity.
- Media.
- Public opinion.
- Party manifestos.
- Budgets.
- Judiciary activity.

How does the US codebook travel ?

- Fairly well between national level. Less than 5% of the

- subtopics were changed in Europe and nearly the whole changes are common to the different European countries
- With a lot of difficulties between national and sub-national level within the USA.

## How are we getting with the huge amount of data ?

- Better and better ! Why ?
- Because we invest more and more in technology and in computer scientists.
- We begin by extracting manually the data to build the data base. Now, we use the skills of computer scientists (some were students) to do automated data extraction. At a ridiculous cost, we set an exhaustive data set of more than 300 000 parliamentary questions in France in one week... And now the software is written. So just few adaptations are needed to replicate the job !

## The new frontier: the automated coding

- We are working on automated coding to be able to code the huge amount of data.
- The principle is to provide the software with the data to code and a small sample of pre-coded examples. And the software learn it. For example for laws, hearings, questions.
- The last issue is the automated coding of newspapers` articles and the content of them: issues, dimensions, speakers, tone...