Chapter Twenty-Six

The Agenda-Setting Capacity of Global Networks

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26.1. Introduction

Agenda setting is today an established and well-defined approach within public policy studies (see Zahariadis 2016 for a review). In the main, such studies have focused upon agenda setting at the national and sub-national levels of governance (Baumgartner and Jones 2009, Sabatier and Weible, 2014). However, the approach is also employed in international relations (e.g. Risse-Kappen 2002) and in development and social movement studies (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Tarrow 2005, Carpenter 2007). This overlap between different sub-fields provides potential intersections for enhancing our understanding of global policy and transnational administration. In particular, the analytical 'added value' of the concept is that it allows us to consider the agenda-setting capacities and powers of actors such as global commissions, international task forces and transnational advocacy networks as well as more traditional International Organisations (IOs) and the actors within them.

This chapter uses the generic term 'global policy networks' to refer to the institutional arrangements – variably labeled as global commissions, international task forces or transnational advocacy networks – typically launched by governments and international organisations, but also involving non-state actors, focused on "global public goods" (see Kaul, this volume). In general, they include a broad variety of actors and negotiated arrangements designed to have an influence in the way global issues are governed. Some are composed primarily of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while in others experts and epistemic communities, multinational enterprises, and/or foundations dominate (Kehoane and Nye 1977, Börzel and Risse 2007, Risse-Kappen 2002). Some are time-bound projects aimed at fulfilling a given task, such as raising money for a specific purpose, while others are more permanent structures aimed at developing and maintaining new rules and standards about specific issues. Some comprise a small set of actors, while others are structured around hundreds of participants.

Many studies have already analyzed how and under what circumstances these global policy networks emerge; how they are institutionalised in terms of their composition and functions; why some issues are the subject of their attention, while others seem invisible;

and, which strategies they adopt to foster policy change at the global scale. These studies adhere to diverse theoretical traditions found mainly in the fields of agenda setting (Keck and Sikkink 1998), social movements (Tarrow 2005) and international relations (Carpenter 2005, Petrova 2018), while empirically they are based on the case study method. As a result, there is no unique, coherent theoretical framework to the study of this new form of global governance.

Most of these studies emphasise that global networks are not new – some of them, like the networks that formed behind the movement for the abolition of slavery, having been in existence since the nineteenth century. Yet over the last few decades they have increased exponentially in number, becoming more complex and professionalised in the process (see the Chapters by Gaus and Legrand in this Handbook). Broadwater and Kaul (2005) estimated that, around 2005, there were more than 400 global venues, compared to about just 50 in the 1980s. Caines et al (2004) identified more than 100 of these global venues dealing with health issues alone, although Buse and Harmer (2007) identified fewer than 30 in the same period. These discrepancies point to the fact that currently there is no consensus as to what we understand might constitute global governance structures, and this problem is one of the main limitations to the study of the role global networks play in agenda setting (Risse-Kappen 2002, Schäferhoff et al 2009).

Existing research also emphasises that global networks are not simply instruments with which powerful states promote their interests in relation to a small set of issues (primarily, security), but institutional arrangements via which non-state actors, including NGOs, multinational companies, foundations, and epistemic communities, interact with governmental actors and international governmental organisations to impact the agenda setting process at global and national levels. Their consolidation as global policy actors has generated a radical transformation in international politics, which has become increasingly more contested, externalised beyond national governments, and open to the input and disruption of a wider variety of political actors. In this new context, global networks play a key role in promoting the introduction of new issues and ways of thinking into formal political debate at the national and international levels.

Yet, existing research suggests that global policy networks are also an important source of policy stability (Buse and Harmer 2007; Börzel and Risse 2007; Stone 2008). Once they are formally institutionalised, global networks act as gate-keepers imposing strict limits on the introduction of new issues and policy proposals that do not match the

principles, values and preferences of international organisations, donors, and other veto players in the global arena. They institutionalise a set of common ideas and understandings of policy issues, and perform their tasks as a means to convince others of the benefits to be derived from such ways of thinking, while limiting the introduction of alternative ideas. In so doing, they contribute to policy stability.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section explains global policy networks as agents of policy change. Following the agenda-setting literature, it argues that the agenda-setting capacity of global networks depends to a large extent on their ability to generate indicators and information; their capacity to frame issues in a way that best fits the principles and values of political institutions; and their ability to take advantage of the opportunities generated by political transformations and shifts in preferences at the national and global scales. The second section argues that global networks have also become an important source of stability, imposing significant limits on the introduction of new issues and on ways of thinking about these issues. The final section stresses some of the limitations of the existing analysis of the agenda-setting capacity of global policy networks and identifies a number of elements for the future research agenda. In particular, questions of representation and accountability prevail in agenda setting in global settings that the existing cache of case study approaches have not tackled as a system-wide concern. By contrast, the rich historical tradition of agenda-setting studies in national settings – exemplified by Schattchneider (1960) Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Dahl (1982) – linked agenda dynamics to democratic praxis.

26.2. Issues, flows of information and policy entrepreneurs

Agenda setting is the process by which certain issues capture the attention of political institutions. In their seminal work, Cobb and Elder (1972) distinguish between the systemic agenda, defined as the group of issues under discussion in society at a particular point in time, and the institutional agenda, the set of issues the government prioritises and debates. In a different vein, Kingdon (1984) classifies agendas into governmental agendas, that is, the list of issues a government is paying attention to, and decision agendas, which includes the issues a government is ready to take a formal decision upon. More recent approaches to agenda setting adopt a broader definition of the political agenda, defining it as the list of issues political institutions pay attention to over time (see Zahariadis 2016 for a review).

Members of international organisations, national governments, and non-state actors have their own agenda and pay attention to issues in a different fashion, taking into account flows of information, policy preferences, and the limits and opportunities of the institutional setting in which they operate (Baumgartner, Jones and Wilkerson 2011).

Not all issues can be on the political agenda at the same time. For this reason, one of the main goals of agenda-setting scholars is to explain how and under what circumstances an issue is likely to be introduced onto the agenda. Issue prioritisation is a competitive process in which different issues vie for attention, but only a few are successful (Jones and Baumgartner 2005, Kingdon 1984). There appear to be two main reasons for this: individuals do not have the cognitive capacity to process and interpret information about numerous issues simultaneously, and even if they had, the rules governing the political system impose strict limits on the number of issues policymakers can handle at any one time (Baumgartner and Jones 2009, 1993). In this context of agenda scarcity, policy actors, like global networks, compete and build alliances in order to influence the list of issues political institutions prioritise and debate. In so doing, they adopt a range of different strategies as explained below.

26.2.1. Information

Agenda-setting scholars emphasise that issue attention depends to a large extent on the means – indicators, focusing events, and feedback concerning previous programs – by which policymakers come to learn about a problem. In some contexts, policy learning occurs automatically as a consequence of a focusing event. Such events are sudden and relatively uncommon, like a tsunami, a terrorist attack, or an environmental disaster (Birkland 1997, Kingdon 1984) and normally constitute an opportunity for advocacy groups to shoehorn new issues and ideas onto the agenda (Zahariadis 2017). This is especially so when the consequences of the event (measured in terms of actual and potential harm) are visible and tangible to policymakers and most citizens, and its impact is concentrated in a particular community or geographical area.

However, in most cases, problems are rarely self-evident. In order for policymakers and citizens to recognise an issue as one that requires government attention, it is necessary to generate credible information and to provide facts and testimonies to assess its magnitude, and of the way in which it changes over time. Thus, one of the key activities of global

networks is to create new information, and to develop indicators about the scale and consequences of an issue. Numerous examples might be cited, but one will suffice here: The lack of indicators partly explains why an issue like corruption did not become a global policy concern until the late 1990s. Although public officials and members of international agencies were fully aware that the funding for many development projects was tainted by some type of corruption, no global initiative was taken to push corruption onto the political agendas of national governments and international organisations. Foreign aid continued to flow even when it was clear that "many companies regularly wrote off bribes as business expenses in their tax filings", and "the graft of some longstanding heads of state was legendary" (Transparency International, History Report 2017).

A gradual change in attitude was achieved when civil-society organisations, like Transparency International, in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental organisations, generated specific information about corruption as an issue. The creation of indexes, like the corruption perception indexes (e.g. Transparency International), was critical for raising public awareness, for comparing the problem across countries and over time, and for convincing national and international political elites of the importance of launching global public-private initiatives – including the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the Partnering Against Corruption Initiative (PACI) (led by the World Economic Forum), the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI); the Water Integrity Network (WIN); the Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative (StAR) – to fight corruption at the global level. Many of these bodies are issue specific global networks but their senior staff often interact with other through informal networks in key global forums.

The creation of indicators and information is one of the main goals of global advocacy networks. The problem is that not everything can be quantified, and even when data are available, it is not as if they cannot be challenged. Examples abound. For instance, one of the main barriers facing the proponents of the prohibition of conventional weapons concerned the presentation of evidence about the degree of inhumanity of the effects of certain weapons. For several years, a network of political institutions, made up of the International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a number of different states, engaged in an effort to come up with an effects-based definition of "inhumane weapons". After years of debate, unnecessary suffering was eventually defined as anything surpassing a "level of lethality, and injury producing effects for which there is no well recognised or proven treatment, or specific disease" (Petrova 2018). From here, the challenge was how to

identify objective criteria to measure this unnecessary suffering. Opponents to the ban persistently questioned any data presented by the proponents of policy change. They considered the use of indicators such as mortality rates or the gravity of wounds to be insufficient to measure the degree of inhumanity of certain weapons, and of little use in drawing conclusions about the extent to which their effects on civilians outweighed their military utility (Petrova 2018). The lack of sound evidence for measuring the effects of these weapons buried any attempt to promote the prohibition of cluster munition weapons for decades.

Making information available is a necessary, but insufficient condition for an issue to get onto the political agenda. Information must also move quickly in those arenas where it can have most impact, and it must be comprehensible and useful to a wide set of actors across countries and political realities (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Global policy networks play a key role in this process of policy diffusion across borders (Stone 2001). They become what Kingdon (1984) and others identify as 'policy entrepreneurs', whose main task is to initiate and expand issue attention (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). These policy entrepreneurs might be in or out of governmental institutions, in elected or appointed positions, in interest or research organisations at the national, sub national or/and international levels (see also Mintrom and Leutjens, this volume). These policy entrepreneurs are highly motivated political actors willing to invest their resources, time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money in the hope of a future return. They might include individuals within a global network, such as Judge Baltasar Garzón in the case of human rights violations during the Pinochet dictatorship; national governments – like Canada or Sweden – in the campaign to prohibit conventional weapons, or international non-governmental organisations, ranging from Greenpeace to Reporters without Borders. Similarly, celebrities, such as the rock star Bono (Jubilee 2000 on debt relief) and Princess Diana (anti-landmine campaign) among others, have championed an issue on the global stage and invite other individuals and organisations to join the campaign.

However, the ability of policy entrepreneurs to place an issue onto the agenda also depends on the attributes of that issue. Here, agenda-setting scholars emphasise issues that are broad in scope – not especially technical, of high social significance, of long temporal relevance, and vague in definition – whose impact is both intense and severe, and that have a direct impact on people's lives – these are the issues that are most likely to attract the attention of a large audience (Cobb and Elder 1972, Zahariadis 2016). More specifically, in

the case of global policy networks, Tomaskovic-Devey et al (2011) consider an issue as being more likely to get onto the agenda if it concerns an obviously vulnerable victim and guilty perpetrator, and when it is possible to link an issue to other issues that are already on the international advocacy agenda or to existing international humanitarian or human rights laws. Equally, issues with a direct emotional appeal (related, for example, to love or fear) stand a better chance of being accepted onto the political agenda. In contrast, issues that are overly complex, represent a taboo for much of the population, do not lend themselves to scientific measurement or which seem to have impossible or unachievable solutions are thought to be less likely to gain advocacy attention (Tomaskovic-Devey et al 2011, Carpenter 2013).

26.2.2. Framing strategies

The capacity of global networks to draw attention to issues depends on their ability to persuade powerful actors and potential issue adopters – international organisations, national governments, foundations, the large international NGOs, etc. – that mobilisation is needed (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). To achieve this, they typically need to engage in framing strategies, understood as "the process by which, people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue, and reorient their thinking about an issue" (Chong and Druckman 2007: 104). Issues can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and can be interpreted as having implications for multiple values and concerns (Schneider and Ingram 1993, Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Advocacy groups seek to win the political battle by shifting the focus of the debate in the direction of those dimensions that best meet their interests, as they attempt to convince policymakers and other potential allies – including public opinion and the media – that their proposal is both convenient and feasible in technical and economic terms, and congruent with the values of community members (Chong and Druckman, 2007).

Global policy networks engage in this process of constructing cognitive frames to persuade decision-makers at the global and national scale that the time is right for a particular idea (Kingdon 1984, Stone 2008). This includes a wide variety of issues ranging from HIV/AIDS to indigenous rights (see Coleman, this volume), violence against women and reproductive rights. As Joachim (2003) emphasises, the inclusion of violence against women on the United Nations (UN) agenda was the result of a strategic framing process led by a coalition of NGOs. For decades, a distinction had been drawn between women's rights

violations – framed as a domestic issue perpetrated by individuals in which the state had no right to interfere and occurring in relatively lower numbers – and human rights (Joachim 2003:258). The coalition set up to fight violence against women was able to overcome *preexisting moral standards* after an intense mobilisation. Their success can be attributed to their ability to mobilise advocacy groups, which generated technical and testimonial knowledge about women's rights violations, and provided scientifically grounded explanations as to why women's rights should also be treated as human rights. The construction of a strong frame was critical for persuading the international community and capturing the attention of powerful allies across borders.

Framing strategies have also played a key role in the case of the fight against malaria and other endemic diseases in less developed countries. Although malaria is an endemic problem that directly affects the lives of millions of people in less developed countries, international organisations did not identify it as a priority issue until the turn of the millennium (Sachs 2005). To capture the attention of powerful organisations and other allies, the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health of the World Health Organisation (WHO), led by Jeffrey Sachs, developed two distinct strategies. First, they generated new information about the imbalance between the resources needed to fight these diseases and the resources international organisations actually dedicated to them. Second, they framed malaria and other endemic diseases not simply as a health issue, but as an economic issue. By talking about money, and the implications of these endemic diseases for economic development, they provided a clear and powerful message to the international community. This 'economic' frame appealed to the shared principles of the members of international institutions and of the political elites. Members of the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health acted as policy entrepreneurs, whose main purpose was to advance the adoption of health problems, such as malaria, as a priority issue on the global agenda.

26.2.3. Preferences

Finally, the agenda-setting capacity of global networks depends to a large extent on preference shifts. Political transformations at the macro-level – including, for example, the end of the Cold War, changes in the political elite formation, a new political party or party coalition taking over the executive, the creation of an inter-governmental organisation (see Tao this volume), a change in strategic alliances among states, or the transformation of the

views of the citizens and political elites on certain issues (like the adoption of the "good governance" paradigm) – generate new opportunities for the defendants of policy change to push for the entry of a new issue onto the agendas of national governments and international institutions.

The end of the Cold War proved critical for the defendants of policy change in many policy areas, especially those related to humanitarian action. For example, the inclusion of the prohibition of conventional weapons on the agenda only occurred in the nineties, following the long, intense mobilisation of a large set of what were primarily NGO actors. The first step taken by the coalition calling for the prohibition of conventional weapons was to create indicators and information about the consequences of using conventional weapons (Petrova 2018). New data clearly showed that the number of casualties attributable to the use of conventional weapons was much greater than that attributable to nuclear and chemical weapons combined; however, policy change only occurred with the radical transformation in the functioning of the international political system, brought about by the end of the Cold War.

By the same token, the adoption of the "good governance" paradigm as the driving principle of supranational institutions, including the European Union and the World Bank, proved critical for the entry of various issues onto the political agenda. From the mid-nineties onwards, good governance came to be appraised not only in terms of economic performance, but also in terms of the quality of political institutions – including the processes by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect shown by citizens and the state for the institutions that govern the economic and social interactions between them (Grindle 2007). This transformation in the way that international and national institutions understand governance opens a window of opportunity for the proponents of political change to push new issues – from the fight against corruption, to health issues, human rights violations and labor conditions – onto the agenda.

On some occasions, political transformations open a window of opportunity for policy change, while on others they serve as a source of policy stability and inaction. Advocacy networks dealing with moral issues, such as abortion, currently face considerable opposition following Donald Trump's election in 2016, but the opposite was the case when Barack Obama was elected to power in 2008. Such political transformations affect the goals and strategies of policy entrepreneurs that seek to promote policy change. Indeed, this is one of

the ideas underpinning the boomerang model developed by Keck and Sikkink (1998). Transnational advocacy networks emerge to tackle those issues that are neglected, or which face repression, at the national level. Their role is to promote causes, generate information, and persuade others to adopt the scenario that best fits with their ideas and ways of thinking. In this way, preference shifts provide new opportunities to promote policy change.

In short, global networks play a key role as agenda setters in relation to a wide range of issues. They act as policy entrepreneurs preparing and disseminating information and promoting ways of thinking about issues across different venues as a means to promote policy change. Their ultimate success depends on the specific attributes of these issues, their ability to create objective indicators and feedback mechanisms, the availability of policy proposals that are not only technically feasible but also in line with cultural and moral values, and the opportunities provided by the political system.

In the next section, it is argued that once global networks have been institutionalised, they act as gatekeepers blocking the entry onto the agenda of those issues that do not match the priorities, values, and principles of the major actors involved in a particular network. Issues such as "children born of war" and urban violence rarely attract much attention on the global security agenda. Likewise, explosive weapons and depleted uranium capture much less attention than landmines and cluster munitions, while pain relief and diabetes receive much less attention than HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria on the global heath agenda (Carpenter 2013). These examples show that issue prioritisation cannot simply be explained as a response to repression or the inaction of national governments, or in terms of the resources and mobilisation capacities of highly motivated policy actors, but rather as part of an argument that institutional factors influence network outputs and outcomes.

26.3. Global Policy Networks as Gate-keepers

Global policy networks are institutional arrangements made up by a diverse set of public and private organisations that exchange information and other resources on a more or less regular basis with the aim of impacting the policy making process at the national and supranational levels. Their capacity to achieve their goals varies depending on their material and information resources, their level of integration and professionalisation, and the recognition they receive as legitimate actors in a particular policy area. Each network is characterised by different institutional features in terms of its composition, commitment and

function, and these differences may impact their agenda-setting capacity. However, there is no consensus in the academic community as to which dimensions need to be taken into account when seeking to explain the importance of institutional factors for the effectiveness of global policy networks.

Most of the research relies on specific case studies of the emergence and consolidation of global policy networks in relation to a particular issue – such as the fight against malaria, HIV-Aids and tuberculosis, violence against women, or security issues – but only a few studies take a comparative approach. Tarrow (2005) proposed a classification of "global coalitions" based on the degree of cooperation among the organisations included in that network – from simply lending a group's name to a manifesto or website to forming a permanent umbrella organisation to perform multiple tasks – and the duration of these coalitions – from maintaining a formal affiliation for the support of a discrete event to making permanent arrangements for cooperation, which normally lead to the creation of a separate organisation. The combination of these dimensions results in four ideal coalition types: Instrumental coalitions, characterised by short-term cooperation and a low level of participation; event coalitions (e.g. the 'Battle of Seattle' during the 1999 World Trade Organisation meeting), characterised by a high level of involvement over a short period of time; federated coalitions, which combine a low degree of participation over a long period; and campaign coalitions, which combine high intensity involvement with long-term cooperation (see also Levi and Murphy 2006).

In contrast, other authors define the institutional features of global networks by recourse to the tenets of the policy networks literature. The transnational advocacy networks defined by Keck and Sikkink (1998) or the global public-private partnerships defined by Reinicke et al (2000) share many of the features associated with policy networks in terms of their composition, strategies, pattern of influence and functions (see Rhodes 2006 for a review). Some of these global networks resemble more closely what Rhodes and Marsh (1992) identified as closed policy communities, or what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) referred to as policy monopolies, comprising a small set of public authorities (members of government, bureaucrats, and/or members of Parliament) and interest organisations that share principles and have a common understanding on a particular issue. With the participation of select private interests, these netwroks are distinct from the entirely official transgovernmental networks analysed by Legrand (this volume). In other cases, like transnational advocacy networks, are more closely associated with "issue networks".

Keck and Sikkink (1998) stress that transnational advocacy networks are forms of organisation characterised by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange, organised to promote causes, principled ideas, and norms, which often involve individuals advocating policy changes that cannot be easily linked to a rationalist understanding of their interests. They include a large and heterogeneous set of actors including national and international non-governmental organisations, local social movements, foundations, business, media outlets, churches, trade unions, consumer associations, intellectuals, and public actors like international intergovernmental organisations, parts of the executive and parliamentary branches of governments, and regional and local governments. Each works internationally on an issue, and is bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 89).

To date, most case studies highlight that the majority of global issues are governed by networks that bear little resemblance to this model of horizontal and reciprocal relations of information exchange and common principled understandings. On the contrary, in many instances, global policy networks are formed by a small set of actors – groups of states, international institutions and privileged groups of activists, experts and advocates – that frame issues according to a common set of shared ideas, and define tactics and strategies to fulfill common purposes. Their goal is also to prepare the foundations for continued collaboration, and in doing so networks become well-organised political structures, in which members trust each other, make credible commitments, resolve tensions, and ensure cooperation through a vast set of formal and informal rules (Tarrow 2005:173).

Global policy networks like GAVI (the vaccine alliance), the Global Water Partnership and human security networks share many of the features of these closed policy communities, formed by a small set of public and private actors. Specifically, human rights, humanitarian affairs, arms control, conflict prevention, and development are all issues governed by UN agencies, national governments that fund human security projects, academic institutions, and a few large, well-connected NGOs, such as the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRD) (Carpenter 2011:73). This privileged group of actors imposes important restrictions on which issues might be prioritised at any given time, and especially, on the way in which these issues are framed through the highly professional and well-resourced communications strategies and advocacy initiatives undertaken by these bodies.

The advocacy network concerned with children and armed conflict (CaAC) is a good example, as it does not advocate for all war-affected children equally. As Carpenter (2007) stresses, the issues and corresponding categories of war-affected children vary greatly in terms of their prominence on the CaAC network's official agenda. Thus, child soldiers are the most prominent category on the agenda, while issues like children born of war or wartime rape are absent entirely (Carpenter 2007). Inaction is accounted for, first, by the fact that these issues and their consequences represent the trauma of war for the nation as a whole, and which few want to remember; and, second, by the overlapping nature of "children born-of-war" with other issues important to the CaAC network and the network of organisations concerned with gender-based violence in conflict zones. As a result, neither the CaAC network nor the gender-based violence network accept a responsibility to respond to the children born of war problem, blaming each other for the failure to act in response to a highly controversial issue.

The gatekeeping capacity of global policy networks is closely linked to the number and type of organisations that have access to these networks (Carpenter 2011). In most cases, only a small set of privileged public and private organisations – ranging from national governments to international organisations, foundations, companies, and think tanks – are able to access global governance structures, and in doing so, potentially impose their views and ways of thinking about different issues. For example, to achieve consultative status at UN conferences, such as with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and to maintain permanent connections with international governmental organisations is only feasible for highly professionalised organisations with a vast store of economic, human and informational resources, and whose mission and activities largely reflect the goals of the UN (Joachim 2003).

Access is more likely to be achieved by major donor organisations, public institutions like the UN institutions and the World Bank, or private institutions like the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation. The funding decisions of these organisations are a powerful instrument to veto the entry of an issue onto the agenda. As to whether major organisations choose to veto the entry of certain issues onto the agenda may depend on whether these issues match the goals and principles of the organisation, whether there are sufficient material and human resources to initiate and maintain a campaign across time, whether the chances of successfully ratifying a treaty or international agreement are deemed to be high, and whether other funders and partners might be secured to the cause (Tomaskovic-Devey et al 2011).

Gaining access to these global venues is also more likely for those organisations that already participate in a global network. Enjoying access to governance structures increases the ability of these organisations to mobilise economic resources, generate alternative policy proposals and reframe issues, shifting the dimensions of the debate in a way that better fits with the ideas and ways of thinking of the major gatekeepers (Petrova 2018). For the same reason, having access to one venue increases the chances of becoming a partner at other venues in the long run, simply because other actors recognise the organisation as a relevant actor in the agenda-setting process. Uncertainty, combined with the large amount of resources needed to gain access to the global arena, partly explains the elitist nature of global network structures. This bias contributes to the reproduction of the same ideas and ways of thinking across issues and time.

In short, issues and ideas "do not float freely", most of the time being hinged to the interests, principles and values of existing political structures (Risse-Kappen 1995, Baumgartner and Jones 1993, among others). As long as these structures remain constant, the issues that reach the agenda are unlikely to change greatly. Global networks play a key role in this process of issue prioritisation, promoting their views and ways of thinking about a growing number of issues. In so doing, they do not respond to the citizens' preferences or to a political mandate, rather they answer solely to their own political criteria while marginalizing those of the citizens, media and other political institutions. As the next section highlights, this is one of the main challenges facing the effective theoretical and empirical study of the agenda-setting capacity of global networks.

26.4. Agenda-setting capacity of global networks: concluding remarks

Global policy networks play a key role in the agenda-setting process by raising public awareness about problems and by framing issues in ways that best match the principles and values of actual and potential allies. As has been argued in this chapter, global networks often act as policy entrepreneurs, seeking to transform political agendas at the global and national levels. Their capacity to promote new ideas and understanding about issues at the global scale depends on their ability to produce information and indicators that can quantify the magnitude of issues and the consequences of inaction and on their capacity to take advantage of the opportunities generated by political transformations and preference shifts. Transformations like the end of the Cold War, changing political elites and the

transformation of citizens' views and understanding about issues are key factors in explaining why global networks can sometimes have an impact on the political agendas of national and international political institutions.

Yet, once they are formally institutionalised, global networks may become important gatekeepers, preventing the entry of certain issues and ideas onto the political agenda, primarily through a strategy of non-decision. Inaction regarding an issue may respond to a wide variety of factors, from short-term concerns of organisational survival to a lack of financial or human resources, the veto of potential donors, the mismatch between the principles and values of the organisations and dominant issue frames, and/or simply the lack of opportunities of success. As a result, some issues are shifted off the political agenda of global networks.

In general, existing research emphasises that the increasing agenda-setting capacity of global networks is a necessary solution to aid both the legitimation and effective delivery of global public goods such as those specified in the Sustainable Development Goals. While network proliferation reflects the need for collaborative, innovative and alternative solutions to the political, economic and social challenges of the new millennium (Carpenter 2007, Risse-Kappen 2000, Stone 2001, 2008), nevertheless, their consolidation as important agenda setters raises major questions of legitimacy and political representation (Held 2006). Are global networks giving priority to the issues that most citizens in developed and less developed countries consider to be most important or are they prioritizing the issues of greatest concern to well-organised interest organisations and/or political elites? What criteria do these global arrangements consider when deciding which issues to prioritise in the first place? How transparent are these institutions and just how open are they to the scrutiny of the media and the general public?

Global networks are having an increasing influence on political agenda at the national and supranational levels, but they are not bound by principles of political accountability. The logic of political responsiveness does not apply to the analysis of the agenda setting of the global networks, simply because their members are not elected and do not have to respect an electoral mandate, nor do they have to define their activities by taking into account citizens' preferences. This constitutes one of the main differences in relation to traditional agenda-setting studies that focus on the workings of advanced democracies, mainly conducted in the US. From Schattchneider (1960) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962) to Dahl (1982), the main goal of agenda-setting scholars has been not only to describe the make-up of political

agendas, but also to explain the extent to which the issues policymakers focus on correspond to the issues deemed most important by citizens and the implications of this for the functioning of democracy. These questions constitute the main challenges for the study of the agenda-setting capacity of global networks and is an area that awaits theoretical and empirical development.

The study of the agenda-setting capacity of global networks is also beset by major methodological shortcomings. There is no single, coherent theoretical framework for their study; on the contrary, some studies draw on the agenda-setting literature, others that of social movements, while others build on the tradition established within international relations. Most research is based on case studies, and with very few exceptions, it employs relatively static approaches that cover short periods of time (Petrova 2018). Moreover, there is no clear definition of just what constitutes global governance structures. Today, most authors are using different labels to refer to largely similar phenomena, which adds unnecessary complexity to their analyses. Some adapt existing labels from the policy (issue) networks literature to identify transnational advocacy policy networks; others are influenced by the social movement tradition, as exemplified by Tarrow (2005); while others talk about public-private partnerships to emphasise the collaboration between international organisations and national governments, on the one hand, and private actors, on the other, to tackle issues at the global level.

Agreement is also absent in the categorisation of these global arrangements. To explain the similarities and differences in the characteristics of global networks, and the implications this might have for the agenda-setting process, a more systematic analysis needs to be developed, based on a common set of categories that describe the institutional features of global policy networks. If this can be achieved, it should be possible to provide a more complete explanation of how and under what circumstances certain issues and ideas gain entry onto the political agenda; of which factors ensure that global policy networks become agents of policy diffusion or/and policy stability over time; and, of whether global networks reproduce power relations at the global scale.

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