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WHO SETS THE AGENDA? ANALYZING ATTENTION TRENDS IN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION IN CANADA, AND LESSONS FOR KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract. The article analyzes the key question, namely who among the key actors in Canada sets the policy agenda on economic diversification, from 2008 to 2015? This key research question has been relevant in contemporary research. Within a range of key actors, academia is found to exert major influence, though often in partnership with Canada's federal and local government institutions and the wider public. This research should contribute to agenda-setting theory in the internet era by defining the most vital actor(s) in Canada based on attention dynamics. The research methodology, which has been employed, includes the use of Canada-based think tank organizational web-sites to collect numbers of trends in terms of relevant publications as a measure for attention trends along with carrying out content analysis; use of academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science aimed to analyze research articles as a measure of scholarly attention; use of Nexis Lexis and Google Search databases with the purpose to analyze media pieces; and the use of Google search database (filtered for blog pieces) and www.blogsearchengine.org in order to trace public comments on media publications focused on the issue, and content analysis of these comments. LEGIS info database is employed to track policy activities, as measured by numbers of bills and laws. Finally, lessons for Kazakhstan are developed.

Keywords: economic diversification, agenda-setting, the role of actors, expert communities, Canada

КҮН ТӘРТІБІН КІМ ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРАДЫ? КАНАДАДАҒЫ ЭКОНОМИКАНЫ ӘРТАРАПТАНДЫРУ МӘСЕЛЕСІНЕ НАЗАР АУДАРУ ҮРДІСТЕРІН ТАЛДАУ ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚСТАН ҮШІН ҰСЫНЫМДАР

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада 2008–2015 жылдар аралығында Канададағы негізгі субъектілердің қайсысы экономиканы әртараптандыруға қатысты саяси күн тәртібін айқындайтыны

туралы мәселе талданады. Бұл зерттеу сұрағы қазіргі заманғы ғылыми ізденістерде өзекті болып табылады. Негізгі қатысушылардың ішінде академиялық ортаның ықпалы зор екені анықталды; алайда бұл ықпал көбінесе Канаданың федералдық және жергілікті билік органдарымен, сондай-ақ жалпы жұртшылықпен серіктестікте жүзеге асады. Зерттеу назар аудару динамикасына сүйене отырып, Канададағы ең маңызды субъектіні (немесе субъектілерді) анықтау арқылы интернет дәуіріндегі «күн тәртібін қалыптастыру» (agenda-setting) теориясына үлес қосады. Зерттеу әдістемесі мыналарды қамтиды: назар аудару үрдістерін бағалау үшін Канададағы сараптамалық орталықтардың (think tanks) веб-сайттарындағы тиісті жарияланымдар санын жинақтау және оларға мазмұндық талдау жасау; ғылыми назарды бағалау мақсатында Scopus және Web of Science сияқты академиялық дерекқорлардағы ғылыми мақалаларды талдау; медиа материалдарды зерттеу үшін Nexis Lexis және Google Search дерекқорларын қолдану; сондай-ақ осы мәселеге қатысты медиа жарияланымдарға жазылған көпшілік пікірлерін қадағалау үшін Google Search (блог жазбаларына сүзгі қойылған) және www.blogsearchengine.org ресурстарын пайдаланып, сол пікірлерге мазмұндық талдау жүргізу. Саяси қызметті, атап айтқанда, заң жобалары мен қабылданған заңдардың санын қадағалау үшін LEGIS info дерекқоры қолданылды. Соңында, осы зерттеу нәтижелері негізінде Қазақстан үшін маңызды тұжырымдар мен ұсынымдар дайындалды.

Түйін сөздер: экономиканы әртараптандыру, күн тәртібін қалыптастыру, акторлардың рөлі, сарапшылар қауымдастықтары, Канада

КТО ОПРЕДЕЛЯЕТ ПОВЕСТКУ ДНЯ? АНАЛИЗ ТЕНДЕНЦИЙ ВНИМАНИЯ К ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ ДИВЕРСИФИКАЦИИ В КАНАДЕ И УРОКИ ДЛЯ КАЗАХСТАНА

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Аннотация. В статье анализируется ключевой вопрос, а именно, кто из ключевых действующих лиц в Канаде определяет политическую повестку дня в области диверсификации экономики с 2008 по 2015 год? Этот ключевой исследовательский вопрос остается актуальным в современных исследованиях. Установлено, что среди ряда ключевых действующих лиц большое влияние оказывают научные круги, хотя часто в партнерстве с федеральными и местными правительственными учреждениями Канады и широкой общественностью. Это исследование должно внести вклад в теорию формирования повестки дня в эпоху Интернета, определив наиболее важных участников в Канаде на основе динамики внимания. Методология исследования, которая была использована, включает в себя использование веб-сайтов базирующихся в Канаде аналитических центров для сбора информации о тенденциях в отношении соответствующих публикаций в качестве меры для определения тенденций внимания, а также проведение контент-анализа; использование академических баз данных, таких как Scopus и Web of Science, для анализа исследований статьи как показатель научного внимания; использование поисковых баз данных Nexis Lexis и Google для анализа материалов СМИ; а также использование поисковой базы данных Google (отфильтрованной по материалам блогов) и www.blogsearchengine.org для отслеживания комментариев общественности к

публикациям в СМИ, посвященным данной проблеме, и контент-анализа этих комментариев. База данных LEGIS info используется для отслеживания политической активности, измеряемой количеством законопроектов и законов. В завершение подготовлен ряд соответствующих выводов и рекомендаций для Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: экономическая диверсификация, формирование повестки дня, роль действующих лиц, экспертные сообщества, Канада

Introduction. This research work focuses on the agenda setting phase of the political cycle process. Defined as the first and vital stage of the process (Howlett et al. 2009), which form the later stages, agenda setting contributes to a better understanding of the role of media in society (Carragee et al. 1987, as in Rogers et al. 1993). Although this stage involves several actors, such as the public, interest groups, think tanks and academics, it seems that the media generally plays a predominantly key role in setting policy agendas, as the scientific debate suggests, despite the growing role of the public since the development of digital tools, it has become more powerful.

The study attempts to answer a key question, namely, who, among key actors, sets the economic diversification policy agenda for Canada, an energy-rich nation, from 2008 to the end of 2015. The year 2008 was chosen as the starting point, since that is when the global financial crisis occurred with a profound impact on the energy-rich Canadian economy. Therefore, at the time the country faced an increasingly strong pressure to develop sound policies aimed at generating economic resilience and boosting diversification. The year 2015 was chosen as the final point to provide a considerable time period to analyze the trends of policy attention.

The main actors analyzed include think tank communities and academic scientists, which together make up the expert professional community, as well as the media and the wider public (jointly as non-experts). The main reason for grouping actors in this way is based on the predominance of non-experts in setting the public agenda, while the role of experts often remains neglected or underrepresented (see, for example, Fuerstein 2008, who called for the need to strengthen the position of epistemic actors in setting policy agendas).

The research question this paper seeks to answer is as follows.

RQ: Who, among the key actors, sets the policy agenda? In order to answer the question, an analysis should focus on contrasting experts versus non-experts: the former incorporating academic scholars and think tank communities in Canada, while the latter encompassing two major actors – Canadian media and the wider public.

First, the context related to economic diversification policy developments in Canada combines low attention, as shown by non-experts as well as government, and higher and systematic attention, that is, with a more regular pattern, as indicated by experts (both think tanks and academics in Canada). These trends were developed first as part of quantitative analysis, then were supported further in the descriptive analysis of NVivo nodes. Among the various sectors related to the discourse of economic diversification policy, all actors highlight the importance of the primary resource sector in Canada, followed by the industrial sector, and then services. The predominant attention of actors on the primary (natural) resource sector has two policy consequences. First, it reflects an overall dependence of energy-rich economies on natural resource use; and second, the primary resource sector is considered the basis for further efforts to diversify the national economy.

Second, regarding the key economic diversification types, attention trends shown by major players across Canada suggest a clear pattern. Specifically, non-experts and Canadian government institutions overall stress the prevalence of market diversification policies, while expert communities focus on high-quality product diversification policy. Therefore, not only non-experts and government stress the need to pursue market diversification (a less technical dimension), but both the media and the government are motivated by incentives to reflect people's preferences, that is the media's interest to 'sell' easily consumable and rather sensational 'news' to the mass reader, while governments aim to build policy discourse following the public's preferences.

Literature review: The key actors in agenda-setting. An important issue of existing agenda setting research is the role of actors in driving the agendas and focusing on the following major research

question: Who actually sets the policy agenda?

Exploring the major policy actors in the agenda context remains a vital issue in current policy debates (Rochefort & Donnelly, 2013). According to the analysis of Daugbjerg and Pedersen (2004), when it comes to setting agendas across various policy areas, the nature of actors initiating policy discourses is an important factor that often helps move an issue from informal to formal, that is institutionalized policy agenda (as in Howlett et al., 2009). Neuman and colleagues (2014) explore the question related to agenda-setting processes in the context of digital change, noting that media and the public agenda-setting relationships can be directed both way.

Research tends to emphasize the greater role of media vis-à-vis the public (Iyengar and Simon 1993; McCombs and Shaw 1972, etc.). Soroka et al. 2013 highlight the important role of media in policy making processes, which can be demonstrated by framing, thus assisting the public to pass their message onto policy agenda. Other scholars emphasize the power of the public to set agendas; for instance, Margetts et al. 2016 study examines the role of citizens in pushing their collective agenda. Wlezien and Soroka (2016) identify active voters as a specific type of the wider public that is most important. In addition, scholars stress the significant role of internet users, also known as netizens, or as "active cyber citizens" (as cited in Denham 2010, p.315) in pushing their policy interests. Internet users, including bloggers, are largely viewed to be independent actors capable of influencing the media and generally shaping public agendas and policy discussion (Cooper 2006, as cited in Denham, 2010). Internet users often respond by commenting on mass media articles while possibly influencing the next media report on a certain issue (Denham, 2010).

Still, others stress a vital role of university-based academic scholars and think tank communities in shaping agendas, for example see Zimmerman's 2016 study on the role of think tanks in security policy debates, Shaw et al.'s 2014 research focused on health care; Ekayani et al. 2016 on the role of academia in setting the forest policy agenda-setting discourse in Indonesia; while Mintrom and Williams (2013) suggest an idea to divide American think tanks into "watchdogs" and "idea brokers" groups (p. 6) based on their policy positions; and Fuerstein (2008), who pushed for strengthening the role of epistemic communities in better informing policy decision-making.

However, some researchers also point to the growing role of other actors in agenda-setting processes. These include, among others, international agencies in Kazakhstan (as elaborated in a study by Mukhtarova et al., 2013); a range of various social media platforms in Italy (as analyzed by Ceron et al. 2015); the role of special interest and advocacy groups in North America and parts of Eastern Europe (Copeland et al. 2016; Bartlett and Pagliarello 2016); European Commission (as in Littoz-Monnet 2012); and political figures in various countries, e.g. Mukhtarova et al. (2013) exploring the power of the nation's president in pushing anti-corruption reforms in Kazakhstan and in other countries, both developed and emerging (Wu et al., 2010; Wanta and Kalyango, 2007).

Thus, two key actors that is media and the public mainly show agenda-setting power across national jurisdictions, followed by academic and think tank communities. Weaver and Choi (2014), as part of their agenda-building review suggest the following five key shaping factors that tend to set the media agenda: a variety of news sources, other (often competing) media outlets, press staff rules and norms, unexpected focusing events, and media audiences. It is worth noting that three of these factors relate to media, while the fifth is about the public's role, and the fourth relating to events.

Therefore, ongoing discussions in the research regarding agenda setting stress the need to focus on the major actors driving policy agendas in a specific context. While the media tends to shape agenda setting discourse, the public has also increasingly grown in its agenda-setting power, especially in the digital era (Margetts et al., 2016). Next, academic scholars and expert groups can also influence agenda setting on complex technical issues, e.g. forest policies in Indonesia (Ekayani et al., 2016); as well as policy issues characterized with uncertainty, such as climate change or biotechnology (Nisbet and Huge, 2006). Therefore, who, among actors, sets the agenda in a certain context on a given policy issue, remains a relevant research question that needs to be explored.

Material and research methods. The content analysis research method well applies in both qualitative and quantitative settings (Roller and lavrakas, 2015). This method was selected because of the online textual nature of economic diversification policy cases. This specific ability to effectively

extract precise meaning while making sufficient inferences forms the essence of content analysis as a valid methodology (Krippendorf, 2013). This research method allows developing accurate inferences that can be further replicated as needed, based on the content of the text.

In particular, NVivo is used for information retrieval and analysis. Computer-aided software programs, e.g. NVivo, are quite useful as repository tools for storing encoded data while proving efficient for learning and reporting purposes. Overall, content analysis as the research method can be one of the two types: quantitative and qualitative (as in Figure 1). Though this research involves numerical figures, such as the numbers of specific issues mentioned online, it relies heavily on qualitative analysis based on the analysis of key actors, as well as related processes.

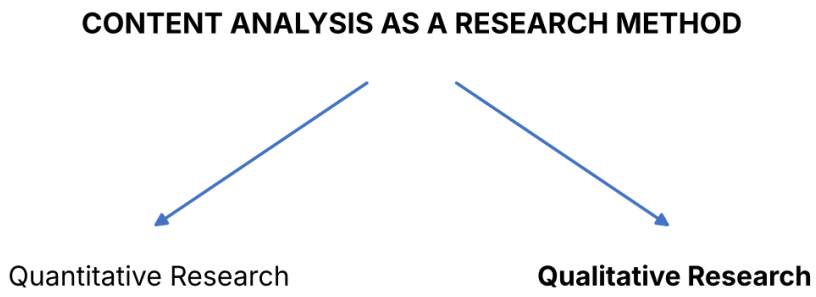


Figure 1. The two primary applications of the content analysis method
Source: Roller and Lavrakas (2015)

For the purpose of carrying out qualitative analysis, an inductive approach is used. In doing so, for example, scientific knowledge and hypotheses are primarily driven by the researcher's analysis of digital text data, online news, blogs and so on. Scholars using quantitative methods tend to build coding early throughout their research process, while those researchers who employ qualitative content analysis review their content from time to time in order to enhance their understanding of research and, when needed, change their code as part of their data collection efforts, not just at the beginning of the research process (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015).

The search for documented references to the government activities in the area of diversifying the economy includes the following sources:

- Canadian Parliament database called 'LegisInfo', with attention focused on seeking "economic diversification" in title and content. The search efforts resulted in a total of 12 draft laws, four of which were selected in the final sample based on content substance, i.e. with at least two references to these issues, and relevance.

- all government organizations with the www.Canada.ca domain by using Google search: "economic diversification" OR "diversif* econom* AND Canada" site:canada.ca, time span [2008-2015]. The search led to selection of 42 Google files, including 21 files selected for analysis.

The sample size in total, which had been collected for further analysis, constituted 25 referenced sources related to economic diversification policy. These include four sources in 2015, seven in the year 2014, followed by three in 2013, then another three in the year 2012, three in 2011, then two documented sources in 2010, another two in 2009, and a single source in 2008 (as in Fig. 2). The Canadian government overall remained rather inattentive to economic diversification policy in 2008-2013, with a spike by the year 2014, and then showing a downward trend again by 2015.

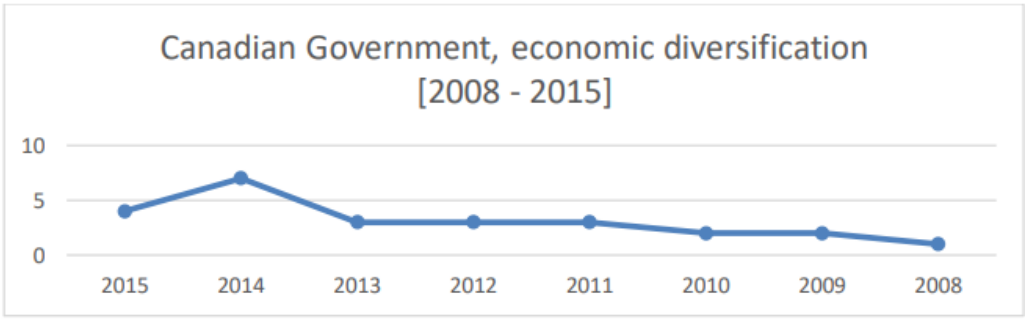


Figure 2. Trends in the number of mentions by Canadian government institutions
Source: adopted from Dyussenov (2018)

Subsequently, a search for major media articles using Google Search and LexisNexis databases resulted in a selection of 66 pieces. When analyzing media articles, the author realized that almost all media pieces produced by Google had also been included in LexisNexis. The sample size of 66 articles included 27 referenced in 2015, followed by five sources in 2014, seven references in 2013, eight sources in 2012, five documented mentions in 2011, six in 2010, four in 2009 and another four in 2008 (as in Fig. 3). The media mostly remained inactive over the time, with increased attention in 2015, that is from 5 articles collected as of 2014 to 27 in 2015.

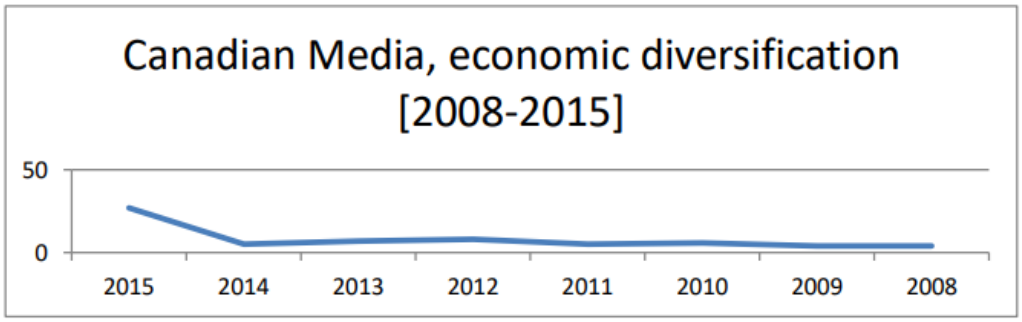


Figure 3. Trends in the number of mentions by media on economic diversification policy
Source: adopted from Dyussenov (2018)

The search for public comments includes blog sources as produced by Google (4 pieces), those media sources generated by the use of LexisNexis with public comments posted (12 sources), and opinion articles (2). In total, 18 blog sources, media pieces (with public comments posted) and opinion articles had been selected for analysis. These incorporate 10 sources in 2015, two sources in 2014, three in 2013, none in the year 2012, two documented references in 2011, none in 2010, a single source documented around the year 2009, and zero in 2008 (as in Figure 4). The data point to two observations. First, the public remained rather inactive in the 2008-2014 period, with an attention increase in 2015. Second, during the time period overall the public's attention has grown somewhat, though remaining relatively low except around 2015.

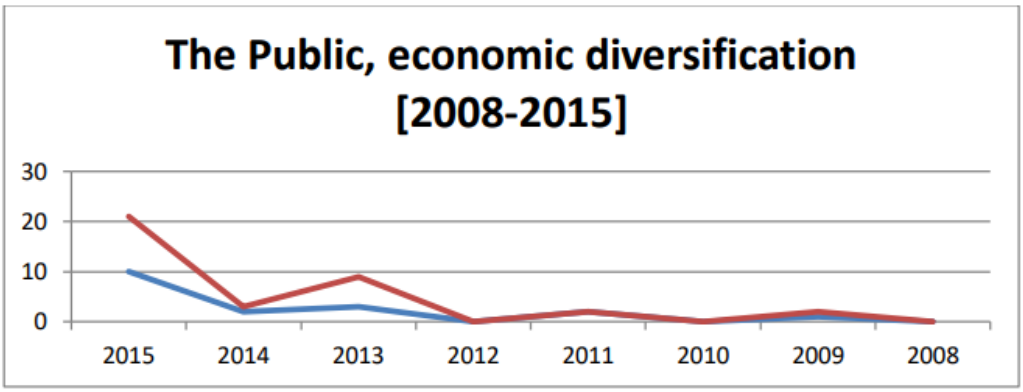


Figure 4. Trends in the number of mentions by Canadian netizens on diversification
Note: *media articles, opinion and blog pieces are in blue; reader comments in red.*
Source: adopted from Dyussenov (2018)

As for reader comments, a total of 37 comments on media articles and online blogs were identified. These encompass 21 public comments either posted or published in 2015 (a sharp increase), three referenced points in 2014, nine sources in 2013, none in the year 2012, two references around 2011, none in 2010, two sources in 2009 and none in the year 2008. As a general observation, the higher the activity of media and blogs, the higher the number of online public comments posted. Yet, it seems unclear whether the media and blogs really cause a higher intensity level of comments posted online. The public can also shape the government's agenda using the media as a platform or tool; in other words, public attention can cause fluctuations in the government's (mediated) attention. This should become apparent when qualitative analysis of content is used to observe specific interactions.

The search for scholarly publications focused on economic diversification policy in Canada was conducted using Scopus and Web of Science. The sample selected for analysis is 30. This includes two sources in 2015, three references in 2014, another three around 2013, five sources documented in 2012, and two in 2011, with a spike of 8 sources in 2010, 4 in 2009 and 3 in 2008. As Fig. 5 suggests, the peak of academic attention to economic diversification policy is 2010.

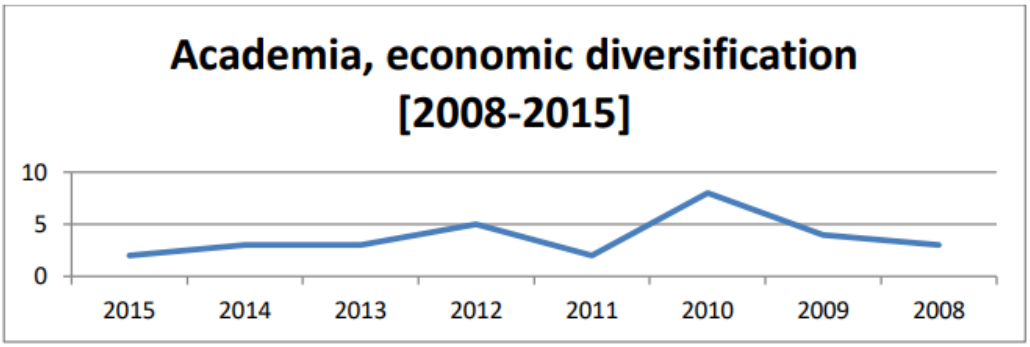


Figure 5. Trends in the number of scholarly publications focused on diversification
Source: adopted from Dyussenov (2018)

Finally, the search for think tank publications led to 47 pieces selected. These encompass seven documented references in 2015, nine sources around the year 2014, seven in 2013, four sources in 2012, eight documented references in 2011, three around 2010, five references around the year 2009, and four sources in 2008. The results are plotted in Figure 6 below. There are two specific spiky trends among think tanks with regard to the policy issue under analysis – first, in 2011 (8 publications), and then in 2014 (9 sources) – the difference between these two spikes being rather small. Furthermore, attention trends overall tend to increase over the time.

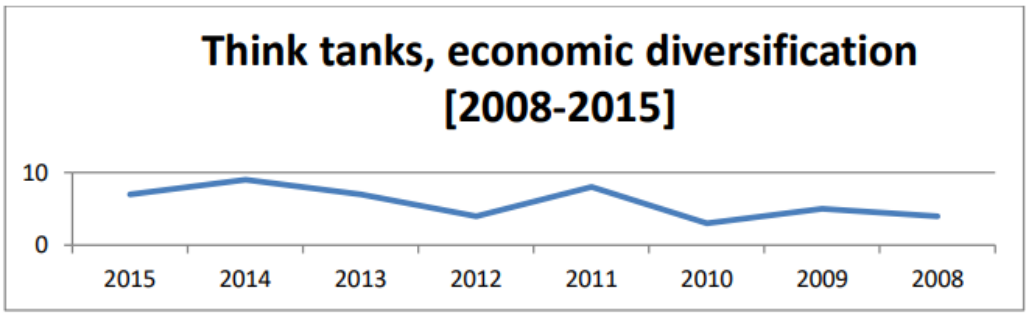


Figure 6. Trends in the number of mentions by Canadian think tanks on diversification
Source: adopted from Dyussenov (2018)

As the next step following the quantitative analysis, the more detailed qualitative analysis of content is carried out. First of all, media, when reflecting on the development of economic diversification policies in the time period from 2008 to 2015, showed concern as measured by the number of explicit references to specific actors, e.g. the president and government (33 sources), followed by academia (19) and the private sector (13), while other actors received less media attention. Next, the key sectors where economic diversification efforts should continue include resource extraction sectors (40 references), including mining and other primary resources (27) and agriculture (13). It is worth noting that the emphasis on developed industries also remains high (39 references), which include technology (16), green energy and renewables (10 documented sources), and the processing sector (8). Third, in terms of the main types of economic diversification, media attention remains focused on diversifying the market (11 references) and efforts to diversify the industry, with far less dependence on oil and gas (9 references), as compared to diversification within the energy sector (6) and product diversification (1). Finally, with regard to generating cause and effect links, media produces 8 causes and 4 effects of diversification. This is roughly comparable to 6 and 3 sources produced by the public, and 6 and 0 by government agencies.

On the other hand, the expert community tends to point to higher intensities in relation to cause and effect links, specifically academia (11, 10) and (11, 12) by think tanks. This suggests that it is for the most part experts that pay more constant attention to economic diversification than non-experts and government in Canada.

Among the Canadian expert communities, academia tends to suggest the significance of the following actors: their research and scholarly counterparts (20 documented sources), followed by the wider public (16 references) and government institutions (with 15 sources). Second, with regard to the key industry sectors, these include primary resources (with 26 references in total) – including mining, such as oil and gas (13) and the agricultural sector (13); advanced industries (15 sources in total) – such as technology and software (6), bioenergy and processing (3), green and renewable energy (5 references) and knowledge sectors (1); and the service sector (14). Thus, while media attention focuses on the development of primary resource extraction and developed industries, academic attention focuses more on primary resources, and less priority given for technology and the service sector. Third, regarding types of diversification, academia emphasizes the need to encourage product diversification (11), followed by market diversification (8), diversification in the energy Sector (6), and industrial diversification (5). This is in contrast to media, which puts a high priority on increasing market diversity, followed by industry diversity.

Other sections of experts, namely think tanks, emphasize the following actors – Canadian Government of all levels (33 references), private sector (26), followed by the public (17). Both media and think tanks, but not academia, refer more to the government than any other actor. Second, key industries noted by think tanks include the resource sector (total 54) including mining (38) and agriculture (16), followed by advanced industries (total 28) such as technology (10), knowledge (9), and green and renewable energy (9); as well as the service sector (24). Similar to academia, think tanks tend to pay more attention to the primary resource sector. Third, key types of diversification are market diversification (37), followed by product diversification (18) and industrial diversification

(12), while diversification in the energy sector (8) receives moderate attention. This is quite different from the trend shown by academics, who emphasize product diversity.

Next, the online public, also known as netizens, mainly refers to the following actors: government (24 documented references), followed by the general public (13 references), academia and scholars (7) and the private sector (6). Secondly, key sectors include the extraction of primary resources (23 in total), followed by developed and advanced industries (15), while public attention to the service sector (6 in total) remains significantly less. With regard to the types of economic diversification, the general public refers more to market diversification (11 sources) and industrial diversification (9), while diversification in the energy sector receives less attention (4 references).

Finally, the Canadian government refers to the following actors: other government agencies (28 documented mentions), followed by the public and NGOs (7), while other actors receive less attention. Secondly, the government highlighted the following main sectors: developed industries (19 references), followed by the extraction of primary resources (18) and the service sector (13 references), while other sectors received less attention. Third, Canadian government discourse highlights the following types of economic diversification policies: market diversification (10) followed by product diversification (5) and industrial diversification (5). It is worth noting some of the relationship between Canadian public agencies (online) and the government in terms of attention to the type of economic diversification of the two actors clearly define only three types of diversification, and market diversification is the most dominant. Both actors paid limited attention to this issue. However, it is also interesting to see some differences in the environment of their interests: while the public also emphasizes the pursuit of industrial diversity (9 references), The Canadian government seems to give it a slightly lower priority (with 5 references to both industry and product diversification). This can be explained by the fact that the state is clearly aware of the costs associated with the implementation of (high-quality) intense measures focused on pursuing industrial diversification policy, in contrast to the existing market diversification of industries. Also notable is the government's lack of much emphasis on diversity in the energy sector, which again supports previous observations of the Canadian government's increasing resistance to external pressures, for example from extractive industry groups. Almost all actors (except academia) point to the government as the main actor. The second key actor is academia, while the third main actor is found to be the private sector. In addition, when it comes to cause and effect links, it is mostly academia and think tank communities that appear to show more systemic attention than the other actors analyzed. Therefore, key agenda-setting interactions as applied to economic diversification in the Canadian policy analysis context should be developed primarily between the government and academia. Moreover, in relation to key industrial sectors, almost all actors unanimously point to the need to promote the diversification agenda in the context of key resource sectors. Finally, with regard to the type of economic diversification, almost all actors point to market diversification, with the exception of academics, whose focus instead is on product diversification (11), although the attention paid to market diversification is still considerable (8).

Key findings and discussion. The key purpose of this research article is to answer the research question as follows. RQ: who sets the policy agenda? When it comes to analyzing economic diversification policy discourse in Canada, academia seems to be setting the political agenda, followed by the private sector. This finding points to a stronger role of academia, as compared to other key actors, as a capable player setting a context-specific policy agenda.

On the other hand, however, Canadian media is found to be less active, that is it largely acts as an intermediary for other players, such as academic scholars who are often involved in driving the discourse on policy agendas for diversifying the Canadian economy and shifting their messages to other actors such as national government. This is in line with recent agenda building research, which often views media as a passive player whose agenda is formed as a result of "ongoing negotiations between media personnel and their sources of information" (as in Denham 2010, p. 311).

In a similar manner, Wanta and Kalyango (2007) observed that the U.S. media coverage was largely shaped by the president's focus on terrorism issues in Africa. The study suggests that when it comes to economic diversification, the primary source of information, as seen by the media, is academia in Canada. In addition, as described in the study carried by Dyussenov (2018) as part of

his doctoral dissertation, it is important to differentiate between *agenda co-building* as elaborated by Denham (2010), which is supported by this research, and *pre-built agenda-setting*, where the media agenda is set, or pre-assembled, due to the impact from a large-scale focusing event (such as mass gunshots, spread of pandemics, etc.) and public opinion, whereby media employees might barely be given a few hours to grasp the reactions of the public to a specific event to create their story.

Another theory that should be revisited in light of the key findings of this research (and the findings of the Dyussenov 2018 dissertation study) is the political contestation framework driven by the need to define the extent of contestation and conflict between actors (Schattschneider, 1960). As this research supports the validity of the partnership-driven agenda-setting concept, the importance of cooperation among key actors has been stressed when analyzing economic diversification policy agenda-setting processes in Canada. The new concept of partnership-based agenda-setting, whereby a key actor attempts to shape the policy discourse by using mutually reinforcing links with other influential players, is thus context-specific and should be the focus for further research.

Conclusion. This research suggests a number of findings. First, it seeks to contribute to the RQ-centered academic discourse about who, among the key actors, sets the agenda for economic diversification policy in Canada. In particular, it renders support to some of existing public policy research to the extent that academic scholars shape the Canadian policy agenda for economic diversification. However, unlike much traditional media-oriented policy research (such as McCombs and Shaw 1972; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Wood and Peake 1998, among others), this study, further aligned with Dyussenov 2018) reinforces the specific contextual validity of Agenda-Building theory (originally developed by Cobb and Elder 1972; elaborated by Denham 2010). Second, this study aims to contribute to scholarly debates stemming from Schattschneider's (1960) political contestation framework and Denham's 2010 agenda building model.

Furthermore, this study points to the conceptual validity of cooperative, or partnership-based agenda setting processes. Further studies should possibly support the validity of this concept focused on other agenda-setting contexts in various jurisdictions. The analysis conducted as part of this study shows some implications and seeks to offer certain recommendations with regard to Kazakhstan's economic diversification policy discourse. First, a specific identification of key actors driving the political agenda for a certain issue or area allows government decision makers to develop an efficient policy design. Provided that academia remains a vital actor in driving the economic diversification agenda, the government should allocate resources to better accommodate the interests of scholars through research grants and expanding academic programs. The second recommendation is related to the concept of partnership-driven agenda based on cooperation. By adopting a stance in favor of cooperation, the government should boost chances for adopting a sound policy design.

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