**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

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**WHEN OPEN-MEETS-DIGITAL:** GOV.uk INFO-ATTENTION MARKETPLACE, ACTIONABLE UK GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES and AGENDA-ATTENTION

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Government**

**of the London School of Economics and Political Science**

**for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**London, 21 July 2022**

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Miran Andreas Norderland
21 July 2022 (London, UK)

# DEDICATION

To Melanie Anderson, Ivan Janković and Jenny Hargreaves

*Thank you for being there every step of the way…..*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# ABSTRACT

Social scientists have tried to decode institutional and societal priorities for decades – which issues/events/countries attract attention and how long they maintain their actionable agenda status. One of the reoccurring challenges in the process was the lack of accessible, standardised, and comparable data, especially when trying to identify government priorities and measure policy/public agenda-attention. However, as the adoption of web-based technology changes how government communicates and engages citizens, our ability to access open-digital information and make more accurate agenda observations has improved.

As the role of centralised government portals expands, so is the need to examine how this *'Open-Information meets Digital Attention'* nexus can help us identify actionable government priorities, improve our understanding of how issues are (re)prioritised and how those agenda-attention dynamics change over time. We consider the launch of *GOV.uk* in 2012 to be highly relevant for this research. Thanks to the portal's centralised knowledge management system, standardised organisational typology, and uninformed search filters, we can now access new data, observe users' preferences, and repurpose government information to establish associations between 357 departments/agencies, 47 policy areas, 219 policies, 49 topical events and 237 locations.

The premise of this thesis is to examine the untapped potential of centralised government portals for agenda-attention research. We want to know if portals like *GOV.uk* can unlock alternative agenda-perspectives and data sources that can be aligned with existing theoretical frameworks as we seek to bridge a gap between theory and practice?

We address this issue by contextualising GOV.uk as an *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* – to be observed as a space where a *Supply* of digitised government information meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open data. In the process, we have used published government 'info-flows' to establish institutional preferences and the 'pageview' analytics to define public attentiveness for actionable government priorities over six years (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016).

Finally, we were able to demonstrate the applicability and resourcefulness of a centralised government portal for the agenda-attention research by (1) mapping out the *UK Policy Platform* and identifying the actionable government priorities; (2) computing policy/public agenda-attention frequency; (3) observing *Aggregated-Coordinative-Communicative* agenda-attention perspectives; (4) establishing a ranking order of institutional preferences along the *Agenda-Attention Continuum*; and (5) detecting the level of (miss)alignment between policy and public agendas when *'Supply-meets-Demand'* on the *GOV.uk* platform.

TAGS:

2010 – 2016 | Actionable Government Priorities | Agenda-Attention | Agenda-Continuum | Aggregated Agenda-Attention | Communicative Agenda-Attention | Coordinative Agenda-Attention | Forecasting | GOV.uk | Government | Government as a Platform | GovTech | InfoAttention Marketplace | Institutional Preferences | Issue-Attention | Nowcasting | Open and Digital Government | Open-meets-Digital | Public Attentiveness | Public Policy | UK Government | United Kingdom | UK

# TABLE of CONTENTS

# LIST of FIGURES

*Data and information presented in these figures were collected, formatted, calculated, visualised, and analysed by the author of this Thesis, unless otherwise indicated in the text:*

## CHAPTER #02: The GOV.uk Platform

## CHAPTER #03: Research Design

## CHAPTER #04: GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace I
'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share': When Supply-meets-Demand

## CHAPTER #05: GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace II
'Agenda-Attention Continuum' and Ranking Order of Institutional Preferences

## CHAPTER #06: Conclusion

# ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **24+2** | 24 Ministerial Departments + the offices of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister *(UK Government – Cabinet-level ministerial departments)* |
| **25-50-25** | Data-standardisation protocol – ranking actionable government priorities by their agenda-attention priority level: Top 25% - Middle 50% - Bottom 25% |
| **AAMS** | Agenda-Attention-Market-Share |
| **AGO** | Attorney General's Office |
| **AGP** | Actionable Government Priorities |
| **AS** | Agenda-Setting |
| **AT** | Agenda-Attention |
| **CO** | Cabinet Office |
| **DBIS** | Department for Business, Innovation & Skills |
| **DCLG** | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| **DCMS** | Department for Culture, Media & Sport |
| **DECC** | Department of Energy & Climate Change |
| **DEFRA** | Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs |
| **DfE** | Department for Education |
| **DFID** | Department for International Development |
| **DfT** | Department for Transport |
| **DH** | Department of Health |
| **DPM** | Deputy Prime Minister's Office |
| **DWP** | Department for Work and Pensions |
| **FCO** | Foreign & Commonwealth Office |
| **FOI** | Freedom of Information [request/act] |
| **GDS** | Government Digital Services |
| **GOV.uk** | A centralised webpage for the UK Government (www.gov.uk) |
| **GaaP** | Government as a Platform |
| **HMT** | HM Treasury |

| | |
|---|---|
| **HO** | Home Office |
| **IF** | An 'Info-Flow' *(a single unit of published government information on GOV.uk)* |
| **INFO-FLOW** | Information-Flow *(a single unit of published government information on GOV.uk)* |
| **MoD** | Ministry of Defence |
| **MoJ** | Ministry of Justice |
| **NIO** | Northern Ireland Office |
| **OAG** | Office of the Advocate General for Scotland |
| **OLHC** | Office of the Leader of the House of Commons |
| **OLHL** | Office of the Leader of the House of Lords |
| **PAGEVIEW** | How many times a webpage was accessed/viewed by a user |
| **PM** | Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street |
| **SO** | Scotland Office |
| **UK** | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| **UK Gov** | Government of the United Kingdom |
| **UKEF** | UK Export Finance |
| **WO** | Wales Office |
| **WWW** | World Wide Web |
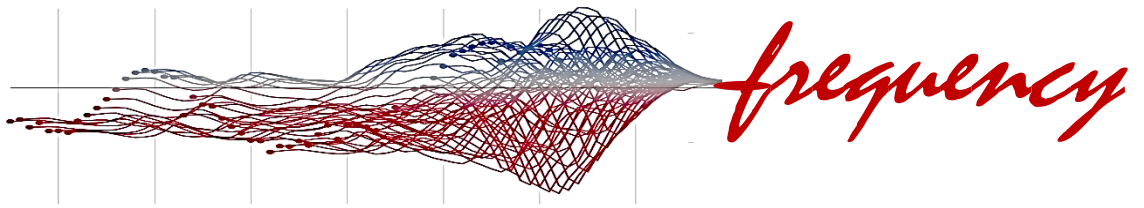
**@GOV.uk**

# AGENDA-SPACE:
# ATTENTION and INFORMATION

## Attention and Information in the Limited Agenda-Space

Since the early days of the agenda-setting discourse, social scientists have tried to decode policy and societal priorities – which issues/events/locations attract attention. In the process, numerous case studies, theories, and models were produced to explain how the issues are prioritised, when they move from the periphery to the epicentre of government activity, and how long they retain their 'actionable' agenda status. Regardless of their approach, they have all faced a common challenge – a paucity of accessible, standardised, and comparable data, especially when identifying government priorities and measuring policy/public agenda-attention. This was, and largely remains, the most challenging task for the researchers, especially when securing a sustainable data source in a reusable digital format. In most cases, it was up to the researcher to contextualise the observed 'policy commons', identify the 'agenda list', organise policies under wider topical umbrellas, and isolate data elements that can provide the most accurate agenda-attention insights.

As we progress with our research, we will refer to the term *Agenda* as a list of actionable government priorities[1] – a set of topics, policies, events and locations that have officially moved from the periphery to the epicentre of government attention. While some of the actionable items may benefit from sustainable political and/or financial capital; others may have been selected for their symbolic reasons (appealing to the electorate, even if there is no capacity to implement their objectives), or because their policy features can provide a 'useful' distraction from other forms of government (in)activity. Regardless of the motives or the likelihood of their success, these items have attained their 'actionable' status because they were able to supersede other issues and events at the time when *"attention is scarce and therefore, individuals as well as institutions have to establish priorities"* (Zahariadis, 2016; p5). However, an item of perceived importance on the public agenda does not always find its way into the policy agendas or vice versa. Amid new technological, political, economic and cultural changes, it is challenging to determine where the agenda preferences originate - what is being said, who hears it, what they do with it, how it is being interpreted and most importantly, with what effect. Even after decades of intense agenda-setting academic discourse, the central question of who decides which issues/events/countries are the most important and how they are prioritised remains partly answered.

However, all these debates have one common denominator, a somewhat conflicting *Information-Attention* nexus. On the one hand, policymakers and public require accurate, reliable and timely information in order to make evidence-based decisions. On the other hand,

that knowledge remains ineffective if it is not associated with institutional/public attention that can propel an issue from the periphery to the epicentre of the government's attention. As a result, the policy commons are in constant flux as different issues compete for limited agenda space.

Furthermore, the agenda-setting research must also consider the impact of disruptive[2] technology on how government operates and communicates. The use of technological innovations to foster efficiency, cut cost and engage with the public is not a novel concept; the evolution of *e-Government* paints a clear picture of how technology was adopted and adapted across the public sector with various degrees of success. However, with the emergence of the Internet, big/open data, and social media, our understanding of how government operates is changing. Whether this means that we are dealing with a digital or a digitised government is irrelevant when it comes to our ability to decode its activity. In the context of the agenda-setting research, if a so-called digital government is not transparent about its activities, its adoption of the latest technology is of little use to us if we do not have access to relevant information. Equally, if an open government is not digitised, it is (un)intentionally limiting our ability to access, standardise and reformat open data. As we are currently in the midst of this experiment, whether these changes will make governments, both open and digital by default, remains to be seen.

Subsequently, with the adoption and adaptation of Web-based technology our ability to identify, access and reformat relevant information has gradually improved. As governments are becoming more open and digital, our capacity to navigate the information commons and make more accurate agenda-related observations has improved. Although our ability to code the agenda process in a manner that reflects the government's internal thinking continues to be a recurring impediment. Therefore, we should remind ourselves that technology has an operational capacity to make [digital] government more accessible, resourceful, interactive and user-friendly. Though it cannot resolve a primarily policy/political issue – what to publish, when, in what format and through which channel. As such, the government's inability or unwillingness to communicate its internal agenda-setting methodology - assuming such protocol even exists - was always a challenge for the agenda research. Which is why we are interested to discover untapped potential of Open-meets-Digital construct for the agenda-attention research. In particular by focusing how open information and digital attention manifest themselves on centralised government portals that act both as a platform for government policymaking and a gateway to government information. A place where institutional preferences and public attentiveness compete for information and attention.

For the past 50 years, numerous case studies, theories and models have tried to decode the agenda with different degrees of success. Regardless of their approach, they all shared a common challenge – which data should be used to establish the most accurate list of policy priorities and measure the agenda-attention frequency? From the beginning, one of the reoccurring obstacles was how to classify and code the government's activity in a standardised and sustainable manner. In most cases, it was up to the researcher to contextualise the observed 'policy commons', organise policies under wider topical umbrellas, and isolate data elements that can provide the most accurate insights into the agenda protocol. This was, and largely remains the most challenging task for the researchers, especially when it comes to comparative case studies as the same data sources may not be accessible in each domain or formatted in a way that allows for standardised interpretation of the coordinative and/or communicative-agenda. Even if one can download an up-to-date list of [actionable] government policies, there is no way of knowing which one is trending high or low along the agenda-continuum at any given time. This is mostly because governments remain ambiguous about their policymaking process.

*Cobb and Elder* were the first to differentiate between the *'Systemic Agenda'*, issues of concern with the societal realm, and the *'Institutional Agenda'*, as a set of issues discussed within the government (1972). Since then, scholars have expanded their research net by focusing on different agenda-setters. For example, the '*Institutional Agenda'* can provide distinctly different findings if observed in political, executive, legislative, or epistemic context. Similar typology can be applied to public agenda if we focus on particular demographics and specific locations or distinguish between traditional and digital media news cycles. Once those parameters are established, knowing how a problem has been defined, selected, prioritised, and moved along the agenda-continuum is essential to understanding the process of policy agenda-formation. While most early studies focus on non-decision and power, more contemporary research is concerned with how decision-making processes respond to the agenda-attention fluctuations as issues/events alternate between high and low salience periods. Subsequently, *Majone* reminds us that in the case of agenda-setting, "no generally accepted paradigm exists," because even best-known models are "largely descriptive, as they take into the account only some aspects of what one could reasonably assume to be part of the agenda-setting" (2008; p.229).

In order to detect and measure public agenda on a variety of policy issues, events and campaigns, politicians and policymakers use multiple sources of information, from experts' advice to use of polls, focus groups or social media when establishing direct contact with individual citizens and community groups. As they receive (un)wanted feedback, they seek to decode public pulse by crafting an appropriate response, mediating existing conflict, and managing potential reputation risk. However, a tendency to rely on media as the primary source of information to decode public opinion remains prevalent; because politicians tend to view the media agenda as a reflection of societal changes, concerns and aspirations (Walgrave, 2008). Whether the government's response is proactive, reactive or retroactive, depends very much on the external conditions (anticipated vs unexpected) and whether the issue in question is already positioned, framed, and prioritised along the agenda-continuum.

*Barbara Nelson* views agenda-setting from yet another perspective, as to "how public officials learn about new problems, decide to give them their personal attention, and mobilise their organisations to respond to them" (1984; p.20). As part of her argument, she cites five common catalysts for agenda-setting: "catastrophes, technological and demographic change, inequitable distribution of resources, organisational growth, and structural readiness for change" (Nelson, 1984; p.24). Overall, there is a tendency to assume that continuity motives drive the government's attention to particular policy issues due to administrative structures that prefer stability over sudden responsiveness to potential new problems (Kingdon, 1995). By studying the agenda-attention dynamics, one can gain a unique insight into societal priorities of the day and build a more in-depth understanding of how policymaking evolves. Furthermore, a well-constructed methodology can highlight differences between the agenda-groups, expose policy winners and losers in the process (whose influence prevails), and contextualise conditions required for an issue to become an actionable government priority.

This task remains a difficult one, as no model can account for all the preferences and policy dynamics across our society; but with evolving nature of the agenda research that is coupled with rapid changes in how we access, manage and engage with open/digital information; new opportunities are emerging for the social scientists. Therefore, by focusing on the 'economy of attention,' we can improve "our understanding of how some issues come to prominence while others do not, and how those dynamics change over time" (Peake, 2016; p.327). This task remains a difficult one, as no model can account for all the preferences and policy dynamics across our society. However, with rapid changes in how we access, manage and engage with emerging new and alternative data-sources, new opportunities are emerging for social scientists.

As such, the primary objective of our research is to bridge the gap between theory and practice by constructing a methodology that can help us explore the untapped research potential of the Open-meets-Digital construct. Therefore, we are not advocating for new theoretical frameworks in order to contextualise engagement with emerging platforms such as *GOV.uk* – a centralised portal for the *UK Government*. On the contrary, we think the existing theories can remain relevant in this discourse if they have tools to help them align their frameworks with alternative agenda perspectives and new data sources. We aim to accomplish this with our proposed research design and methodology. With that in mind, it is important to note that our two analytical chapters won't be positioning theory in juxtaposition with government portal dynamics. Instead, the plan is to showcase the potential that websites like *GOV.uk* can bring to agenda-attention research by providing new insights and analytics. In that way, researchers can use different components of our research design and modelling to inject alternative data-driven perspectives.

As we focus on institutional preferences and actionable government priorities, we must examine *Policy Agenda* frameworks relevant to our research design and methodology. In the process, we will reflect on *Incrementalism, Agenda-Building, Punctuated Equilibrium, Issue-Attention Cycle*, *Multiple Policy Streams / 'Garbage Can' model, Focused Adaptation and Four "P"s of the Agenda-Setting* concepts. Foremost, because these approaches tend to analyse the entire [institutional] agenda process, use longitudinal case-study methods, and propose a complete agenda-formation model. Moreover, some of their insights are relevant to our research design. They focus on the level of attention attributed to specific policy domains and how it changes over time. Those approaches will be summarised as part of our *Research Design* chapter as we need to note their key attributes for reference purposes. Whilst some of those characteristics will be highlighted in the analytical chapters, the focus will be on our last chapter as we assert the applicability of our findings and methodology for each approach separately. We feel that it's important to show alignments and attachments between existing theoretical frameworks and evolving nature of the agenda-attention.

Subsequently, open and digital information can prove incredibly resourceful to the researchers as they continue to observe the agenda-setting dynamics in real-time. Foremost, as the supply of government information is becoming less obstructive and because technology can capture what information people demand, we need to address a fundamental question: *How to observe the evolving nature of the agenda-setting framework when 'Open-meets-Digital' in the context of centralised government portals?*

## Government as a Website [centralised government portals]

For the past twenty years governments across the world have used web portals to consolidate information, deliver digital services, and increase citizens' engagement with various degrees of success. As the scope and scale of complexity increased, so did the calls for a 'joined-up' government approach when creating a 'one-stop-shopping' experience for the citizens (Henman & Graham, 2019). Today, the preference is given to centralised web-portals - a uniformed gateway to government information and services. On the one hand, this trend is an evolutionary step for the digital government, as more emphasis is placed on standardisation, centralised organisational typology, user experience, simplified transactional services, and the ability to authenticate digital identity. On the other hand, such a strong government association with its centralised web portal redefines how we engage with the bureaucratic system and experience state. As this is still a work in progress, it is difficult to determine if centralised government portals are as effective as initially anticipated, especially as a transition from decentralised to the standardised system is often difficult, costly and prone to inter-departmental conflict (Chadwick, 2011). Thus, the issue is not about 'digital' or 'digitised' government; it is about our perception. Especially, if our interaction with a web-portal is changing how we engage with institutions – a shift from a network of decentralised websites, to experiencing government as a website.

Some may argue that such government portals are not just a centralised website, but a '*Digital Twin',* and it should be treated as a separate agent and not just as a digital extension of its physical representation. How we experience or interact with the public sector will shape how we define government. If that engagement is increasingly digital, citizens will associate websites as a face of government, an intermediary that allows them to complete their task more effectively without constraints of a fixed physical space or limitations of set working hours. Increasingly, all aspects of our lives are being digitised, from work to shopping, education, news consumption and entertainment; it is not surprising that we are also normalising how we perceive the government. Whether an ordinary citizen will define that relationship as digitised, digital, or platform-like is irrelevant as long as those processes can deliver socio-economic benefit to their [analogue] lives.

Since the 1990s, digital government path has been through several different cycles as successive governments have used technology to improve or reform public services. In the process, the attention was usually on adopting technology (quick policy wins) and less so on adapting those tools within the bureaucratic system. As a result, some initiatives can end up

digitising instead of reinventing the existing processes - a rather costly exercise with questionable benefits. Such 'adopt first, adapt later' approach reflects the government's interaction with *Web*-based technology and social media and is a prominent feature in decentralised systems like the *UK.* As each department and agency was allowed to pursue a different digital/web path, it is not surprising that users were unclear if they are dealing with the digital government or a digitised administrative procedure?

In the process, the role of technology in government has changed; it is no longer just a digital tool that automates existing processes and manages information. Instead, the objective is to instigate structural changes at all levels and designate "resources into front-of-house service provision that meets those needs rather than back-office managerial imperatives" (Bastow et al., 2000; p.21). Consequently, how *ICT* is deployed to enable a cross-government public service reform can also shape how we observe policy agenda. As such, it can be challenging to determine if the technology is used as a trigger, catalyst or goal as policy objectives tend to fluctuate in response to (un)predictable nature of disruptive technology. Although it is still early to say if *GOV.uk* would be able to accomplish were other portals and initiatives have failed, we can confidently say that platform's organisational typology has materialised a set of alternative 'data-chambers' that were previously unavailable for the agenda-setting research. We believe that such an *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct can help us identify actionable government priorities, compute the agenda-attention frequency, observe the (re)prioritisation order of institutional preferences, and detect the level of(miss)alignment between policy and public agendas.

## GOV.uk: Untapped [Agenda] Research Potential

For the past twenty years, numerous *UK Governments* have used web portals to consolidate information, deliver digital services, and increase citizens' engagement with various degrees of success. As the scope and scale of complexity increased, so did the calls for a 'joined-up' government approach when creating a 'one-stop-shopping' experience for the citizens (Henman & Graham, 2019). Today, the preference is given to centralised web portals - a uniformed gateway to government information and services. On the one hand, this trend is an evolutionary step for the digital government, as more emphasis is placed on standardisation, centralised organisational typology, user experience, simplified transactional services, and the

ability to authenticate digital identity. On the other hand, such a strong government association with its centralised web portal redefines how we engage with the bureaucratic system and experience state. As this is still a work in progress, it is difficult to determine if centralised government portals are as effective as initially anticipated, especially as a transition from decentralised to the standardised system is often difficult, costly and prone to inter-departmental conflict (Chadwick, 2011). Thus, the issue is not about 'digital' or 'digitised' government; it is about our perception. Are we engaging with a government website, or are we experiencing government as a website?

Such progress is most notable in the UK, following the formation of a *Coalition Government* in May 2010, the new administration was keen to establish its digital credentials from the onset by asking *Martha Lane Fox*, a *UK Digital Champion,* to conduct a thorough review of the existing *Directgov* portal. The objective was to construct a holistic set of recommendations for the government to use the *Internet* to better communicate and interact with citizens. On 23 November 2010, *Fox* published a report, '*Directgov 2010 and beyond: revolution, not evolution'* that calls for radical improvement to government *Internet* services. The recommendations provide a blueprint for how government *Internet* services could be radically transformed over the next few years. The focus was on the "interrelationship between Government use of the Internet, the need for channel shift and the future role of Directgov" (Fox, 2010; p.2). In the process, the government was advised to focus on simplifying digital practice to improve the quality of online channels and user experience. Among other things, she has also addressed the 'branding' issue by advocating for the "adoption of a single Internet domain for central government (Fox, 2010; p.7).

In 2011, the *Government Digital Services (GDS)* were established as a body within the *Cabinet Office* – signalling that digital was reverting to in-house operations. From the start, it was clear that the *GDS* would insistently focus on the user and their needs in the context of a 'single-domain' brand. On 31 January 2012, the *GDS* officially launched a beta phase of *GOV.uk* - a one-stop website for the central government information and services. With this act alone, our ability to decode the government's policy preferences and actionable priorities have greatly improved. The objective is to bring central government departments, agencies and public bodies under a single technological, contextual and information umbrella. As of 9 May 2016, *GOV.uk* was home to 357 government entities – all the way from the *Office of the Prime Minister* to 24 *Ministerial* departments (including FCOs diplomatic network) and 331 other agencies and public bodies (excluding devolved governments, the *NHS*, educational/cultural institutions and several other public sector agencies). What makes *GOV.uk* distinguishable

from other digital initiatives is the level of standardisation and uniformity that is rigorously applied across the platform. Also, there is only one brand, one look and feel, one classification methodology, one user interface, one style, and above all, an integrated way of associating government entities, policies, events and locations with different info-flows. As a result, users/researchers can run multiple information filters across key domains because each department has to follow a template-like approach when curating, classifying and publishing their information. The platform was designed to become a one-stop shop for all government information and services.

We could say that the launch of *GOV.uk* is a game-changer for agenda research. Foremost, because (open-digital) agenda-related information was now being organised using standardised methodology. For the first time, all the central government policies were presented within a single domain; they were grouped by topical associations and cross-referenced with departments, locations and topical events - allowing the researcher to access a large amount of data in digital format and use filters to navigate 25 different types of info-flows. It is precisely this combination of real-time observations and retroactive research that makes *GOV.uk* a potentially sustainable source of officially coded information for agenda research. Although it is still early to say if *GOV.uk* would be able to accomplish where other portals and initiatives have failed, the platform's organisational typology has materialised a set of 'data-chambers'[3] that were previously unavailable for the agenda research. We believe that such an *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct can help us identify actionable government priorities, compute the agenda-attention frequency, observe the (re)prioritisation order of institutional preferences, and detect the level of(miss)alignment between policy and public agendas. Therefore, our aim is to develop a methodological framework for future research as the scope and scale of centralised government web-portals expand by aligning open-digital information with the existing agenda-attention research.

Therefore, what the government decides to publish and what the public wants to access on *GOV.uk* can help us decode institutional preferences and public attentiveness to different issues. On the one hand, content, timing and format of published info-flows are further amplified by their level of interconnectedness with other departments, topics, policies, topical events and/or locations. It is only thanks to the *GOV.uk* organisational typology and digital interface that we can map out those links and construct a better understanding of how government specifies, frames and ranks actionable priorities through information supply. On the other hand, each visitor to *GOV.uk* will leave behind a digital footprint as they interact with

different services and information. As demand for information generates new data, we can use web analytics (e.g., pageviews) to formulate public agenda-attention frequency.

We can suggest that *Information and Attention* are mutually dependent on each other as policy and public agendas cross-sect the *GOV.uk* platform. However, not every info-flow will attract significant public attention, nor will public attentiveness to specific issues influence the government to adjust its policy position. As a result, the supply-demand dynamics will create market-like conditions as agenda-attention cannot be distributed equally to all the actionable government priorities. Those that receive more attention will benefit at the expense of other issues as the ranking order of institutional preferences is continuously adjusted. In the process, the info-flows and pageviews can also help us observe the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas as individual policies, events and locations are (re)prioritised along the agenda-attention continuum.

We are confident that *GOV.uk* data, its organisational framework and a digital interface can provide us with untapped research potential. As such, we can show how this new and alternative source of information can help us understand how institutional preferences and public attentiveness to policy issues (re)prioritise the agenda. Furthermore, by designing a research methodology that can support this task, we can align the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct with the existing agenda-setting research. As the government-technology nexus is rapidly changing, it is essential that we can integrate data opportunities and understand the challenges that a new form of engagement can have for academic research. It is time for the agenda-setting research to be more in sync with the digital government concept and its digitised governing process. While we do not believe that new data opportunities require new theories or models, we believe that the rich tapestry of agenda research can be refreshed by adapting to rapidly changing conditions. Therefore, the real challenge is not incorporating new data with old frameworks; instead, the real test is to make the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct a default element in future agenda-setting research.

Centralised government portals are becoming a prominent feature in numerous countries at different levels of governance from national to regional and the city levels. Although the scope and scale of its open-digital characteristics will be conditioned by politics, financial resources, human capital, and technology, they will all continue to share two key denominators: Information and Attention. At the most basis level, each government will decide what information is published on the portal, when and in what format; why certain topics/issues/events/locations will be amplified, while other actionable government priorities

are; how to detect users' attention on the site and with what effect. With that in mind, we must consider the impact of centralised government portals on the agenda-setting process and how the supply and demand of information may be changing our ability to observe and compute the agenda-attention dynamics. As the role of centralised government portals expands, so is the need to examine how this *'Open-Information meets Digital Attention'* nexus can help us identify actionable government priorities, improve our understanding of how issues are (re)prioritised and how those agenda-attention dynamics change over time. We consider the launch of *GOV.uk* in 2012 to be highly relevant for this research. Thanks to the portal's centralised knowledge management system, standardised organisational typology, and uninformed search filters, we can now access new data, observe users' preferences, and repurpose government information to establish associations between 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments, 47 policy areas, 219 policies, 49 topical events and 237 locations.

Therefore, the premise of this thesis is to **examine the untapped potential of centralised government portals for agenda-attention research. We want to know if portals like GOV.uk can unlock alternative agenda-perspectives and data sources that can be aligned with existing theoretical frameworks as we seek to bridge a gap between theory and practice?**

**We want to know if GOV.uk with its open-digital datasets, officially sanctioned organisation typology, knowledge management protocols, navigational perspectives and users' digital footprint can strengthen our capacity to identify actionable government priorities and decode the frequency of the agenda-attention?**

## Contextualising GOV.uk as InfoAttention Marketplace

To answer our research question, we aim to contextualise the *GOV.uk* as *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* – a space where an open *Supply* of digitised government info-flows meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open information. This approach will allow us to focus on the 'actionable' agenda issues/events, which means that we only observe issues that have already found their way onto the official agenda-continuum. As stated previously, we are not interested in how they got selected; we are keen to understand how the frequency of agenda-attention (re)prioritises actionable government priorities. An *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* is not just a term that we use to describe the *GOV.uk* dynamics; we envision this construct as a

combination of several interconnected elements and processes that can be observed independently from each other and collectively.

The scope and scale of the *GOV.uk* platform are notable, both regarding the amount of information it contains, the type of services it provides and the number of visitors it receives. These numbers will only increase with each new day, making this website one of the largest depositories of government information, a one-stop place for public sector digital services, and space for evolving public engagement through strategic communication and consultation. Although the government has complete control over the site, the *GOV.uk* was designed for the citizens, who have no choice but to engage with the platform if they want to find official information, conduct a transaction, or verify digital identity. As a result, the government may have a monopoly over specific data and services, but that does not necessarily mean that they can tell users *how to engage* with the government (which digital services to use) or *how to think* (which information to access). However, the *GOV.uk* may be successful in suggesting to users *what they may want to think about* by structuring their search and exposing them to 'accidental' information. While some info-flows and services will attract significant and sustainable levels of interests, other policy issues, events, and transactions will experience incremental, punctuated, cyclical, or focused agenda-attention.

Therefore, what the government decides to publish and what the public wants to access on *GOV.uk* can help us decode institutional preferences and public attentiveness to different issues. On the one hand, content, timing and format of published info-flows are further amplified by their level of interconnectedness with other departments, topics, policies, topical events and/or locations. It is only thanks to the *GOV.uk* organisational typology and digital interface that we can map out those links and construct a better understanding of how government specifies, frames and ranks actionable priorities through information supply. On the other hand, each visitor to *GOV.uk* will leave behind a digital footprint as they interact with different services and information. As demand for information generates new data, we can use web analytics (e.g., pageviews) to formulate public agenda-attention frequency. Such dynamics suggest that the *GOV.uk* operates as a complex multi-layered space:

- *…where Open* information meets *Digital* interaction;
- …where *Supply* of government info-flows meets a public *Demand* for information;
- …where *Citizens* engage with *Digital* or *Digitised Government;*
- …where *Institutiona*l preferences meet *Public* attentiveness; *and*
- …where different problems, solutions, ideas, data, campaigns, information, services and announcements are (dis)connected within the shared digital space.

As we proceed, it is important to highlight that our approach to '*Open-meets-Digital*' construct and how we observe *GOV.uk* as *InfoAttention Marketplace* resonates strongly with organisational theory and evolutionary biology adapted by *John Kingdon* (1984) when contextualising the agenda-setting dynamics. Although he defines the agenda as "*a list of subjects or problems to which government officials and people outside of government are paying some serious attention to at any given time* (Kingdon, 1995; p3); he believes that the filtering process is not just influenced by the values of participating agents or the conflict expansion, but also by the degree of actionability. Although he does not propagate that every agenda will only incorporate actionable items, *Kingdon* explains that "*the agenda-setting process narrows this set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention*" (1995; p3) – as policymakers will try to prioritise items that are more likely to deliver desired change.

Furthermore, he was inspired by the '*garbage can*' model of the organisational choice (see Cohen, March and Olsen; 1972) to conceptualise a system that reflects the ambiguity[4] of the policymaking process and temporal nature of issue prioritisation. In his view, a trajectory to the top of the agenda is mainly conditioned by what is happening within the overall system (e.g., competition and external conditions), who is advocating for change and in what manner. In the process, he defines problems, policies and politics as three streams that are mostly independent of each other, even though they coexist within the same policy domain. As such, each stream can filter out which items ought to move from the periphery to the epicentres of the agenda-attention. Although some issues can become problems if they are attached to unexpected events (e.g., natural disasters, or industrial accidents), others may be 'redefined'[5] to suit a particular agenda or ideology. We understand that not all issues, events, policies and/or locations are observed equally in terms of their agenda-priority; nor can they all be seen as a compatible ingredient for *Kingdon's* '*primaeval soup of ideas*[6]' conditioning (1984; chapter 6). In his view, the ideas that get attention tend to 'simmer' for a long time within the respective policy community of influencers and experts before they are (re)introduced as problems or solutions, they are not too complicated or demanding to implement and are financially supportable (government can afford them).

To account for conditions that encourage the three streams to interact, *Kingdon* (1984) has introduced two additional elements to the agenda equation – the concept of policy windows and policy entrepreneurs. On the one hand, by theorising the importance of 'timing' in policymaking, *Kingdon* argued that the movement within and across the agendas is closely associated with the windows of opportunity (Zahariadis, 2016; p12). Therefore, to materialise

policy change, all three streams need to come together when the window of opportunity materialises. This means that the problem is already attracting significant agenda-attention, a possible solution is circulating the policy commons, and the political motive has matured. On the other hand, *Kingdon* notes that the items' rise to prominence is conditioned by the agents' ability to connect those three streams during the short window of opportunity. As such, the policy entrepreneurs will know how to frame problems, develop or find solutions, adapt to the changing political environment and seize the right moment to bring the three streams together (1984). However, more than often, the conditions will rapidly change, and the whole cycle will repeat itself – problems, solutions, and actors will continue to chase each other within the agenda space until they are readapted for the new policy window. Overall, by moving away from problems of democratic theory and by focusing on the dynamics of the [agenda] attention, *Kingdon* was able to "combine agency and structure in a theoretically meaningful way" (Zhariadis, 2016; p12).

In reflection, we can say that our *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* resembles *Kingdon's* '*garbage can*' analogy whereby a variety of institutional agenda-shapers, government's info-flows / topics / policies / events / locations and publics' digital attention co-exist independently from each other within the '*Open-meets-Digital*' construct of a centralised government website. While we expect to detect a significant divergence between institutional preferences and public attentiveness, we may discover that their agenda-attention frequency is sometimes aligned, as they occupy the same (25-50-25) priority sphere of the ranking order. Such conditions could be interpreted as a signal that a policy window is materialising the policy entrepreneur's conditions to (re)prioritise the ranking order of actionable government priorities. On other occasions, the agenda-attention frequency can provide us with valuable insights into how the (re)prioritisation phenomenon can change our policy perceptions when switching between different agenda-perspectives.

Complexity aside, the above listed 'layers' share two common denominators – *Information* and *Attention*. As neither can remain stable in the constantly changing policy space, a single policy domain can simultaneously experience an overload of information and scarcity of attention, and vice versa at different stages of its 'actionable' life-cycle. Therefore, we can present *Information* and *Attention* as our 'research currencies' whose supply-demand dynamics on the *GOV.uk* platform can help us compute the agenda-attention. In that context, the formula is relatively simple. The increasing number of published info-flows within a specific domain indicates that the government pays more attention to that particular issue. Similarly, the number of pageviews for a specific 'landing page' can be used to interpret the level of citizens'

interest for a specific policy, topic, event or location. The same rules apply when the number of info-flows and web traffic decreases, which can be interpreted as internal reprioritisation of actionable government priorities and diminishing public interest.

Therefore, we can suggest that *Information* and *Attention* are mutually dependent on each other as policy and public agendas cross-sect the *GOV.uk* platform. We should also note that not every info-flow will attract significant public attention, nor will public attentiveness to specific issues influence the government to adjust its policy position. As a result, the supply-demand dynamics will create market-like conditions as agenda-attention cannot be distributed equally to all the actionable government priorities. Those that receive more attention will benefit at the expense of other issues as the ranking order of institutional preferences is continuously adjusted. In the process, the info-flow and pageview 'data-chambers' can also help us observe the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas.

*InfoAttention Marketplace* is not just a term that we use to describe the *GOV.uk* dynamics; we envision this construct as a combination of several interconnected elements and processes that can be observed independently from each other and collectively when we need to form the 'big picture'. Therefore, our proposed methodology allows the researchers to focus on different agenda-shapers and policy domains when establishing the agenda-attention frequency, ranking priority of actionable government priorities and the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas.

## Research Objectives

Thanks to GOV.uk centralised knowledge management system, standardised organisational typology, and uninformed search filters, we can now access new data, observe users' preferences, and repurpose government information to establish associations between 357 departments/agencies, 47 policy areas, 219 policies, 49 topical events and 237 locations. Furthermore, as the role of centralised government portals expands, so is the need to examine how this *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct can contribute to the existing agenda-attention research. We address this issue by observing the *GOV.uk* as *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* – a space where a *Supply* of digitised government information meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open data. In the process, we will use published government 'info-flows' to

establish institutional preferences and the 'pageview' analytics to define public attentiveness for actionable government priorities over a six-year period (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016).

As the first step on this long-term journey, we will construct a research design and InfoAttention Marketplace model that can help us determine:

- *…if centralised government portals like GOV.uk can provide alternative data for the agenda-attention research?*

- *…if centralised government portals like GOV.uk can align 'Open-meets-Digital' construct with the existing agenda-attention research?*

- *…if officially sanctioned organisational typology and GOV.uk knowledge management can help us construct the UK Policy Commons and related Agenda-Attention Continuum?*

- *…if open-digital data on GOV.uk can help us identify actionable government priorities, rank institutional preferences, detect public attentiveness, observe (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas and compute the frequency of the agenda-attention?*

Hopefully, our proposed methodology, collected data, analysis and findings will show that centralised government portals should become an integral part of the agenda research. We believe that platforms like *GOV.uk* can provide officially sanctioned information in an easily accessible format that can be adapted for different analytical models. Furthermore, we aim to show how *GOV.uk* information can be repurposed to fit our objectives without jeopardising the integrity of its original meaning and format. Our objective is to demonstrate the applicability and resourcefulness of a proposed methodology framework for the agenda-attention research by:

1. …defining the *'Agenda-Shapers'* and *'UK Policy Platform'* clusters in order to identify the *'Agenda List'* of actionable government priorities;

2. …selecting relevant 'data-chambers' and 'research currencies' to compute institutional and public agenda-attention frequency;

3. …establishing an agenda-attention-market-share for policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations;

4. …observing the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas when they cross-sect on *GOV.uk*; *and*

5. …constructing the *'Agenda-Attention Continuum'* of actionable government priorities by ranking policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations in order of their institutional priority/preference.

We are confident that our methodology will allow us to accomplish the above-stated tasks and that we will be able to show how *GOV.uk* open-digital data can be identified, contextualised, (re)formatted, visualised and analysed in order to show the scope and scale of the *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* for the agenda-attention research. That will be accomplished in the following manner:

## Chapter #02: The GOV.uk Platform

…as the focus of this research is *GOV.uk*, it is important to reflect on the path that has enabled the government to launch this centralised web portal. In the process, we will reflect on its key attributes and digital characteristic as we map out all the relevant elements for our research.

## Chapter #03: Research Design

…in addition to explaining our proposition and modelling, we will identify the *UK Agenda-Shapers*, the *UK Policy Platform* 'data-chambers' (policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations) and associated *Research Design* elements that are key to computing the agenda-attention frequency and establishing the ranking order of policy priorities along the agenda-continuum. We also take the opportunity to reflect on the existing agenda-attention approaches as we seek to validate our argument that this 'new' approach does not require new theoretical frameworks.

## *Analytical Chapters: Preamble*

…will act as introductory blueprint for the two analytical chapters as we seek to define our key elements, parameters and objectives. It will provide a platform to *analyse the supply-demand dynamics of the GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* (establish the agenda-attention-market-share) and *to construct the GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum* (structure an aggregated ranking order of actionable government priorities).

## Chapter #04: **GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace I**

**'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share': When Supply-meets-Demand**

…is our first analytical chapter, and the aim is to establish the *'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share'* by reflecting on supply and demand dynamics. It will be organised into three sections: (1) compute the institutional/policy agenda-attention by using published *GOV.uk* info-flows; (2) define the level of public agenda based on pageview analytics – what the users are accessing on *GOV.uk*; and (3) assess the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas when the supply of digitised government info-flows meets the demand for open information on *GOV.uk* platform.

## Chapter #05: **GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace II**

**'Agenda-Attention Continuum' of Actionable Government Priorities**

…in the second analytical chapter, the focus will be on the *'Agenda-Attention Continuum'*. In particular, how we can use agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities to establish a ranking order of institutional preferences. In the process, we will focus on macro and micro analysis in the context of individual policy clusters: : (1) 47 policy areas; (2) 219 individual policies; (3) 49 topical events; and (4) 237 worldwide locations.

### *Analytical Chapters: Observations*

… we will reflect on key observations from our analytical chapters that capture the essence of our objectives, data protocols, analysis and findings. This sitemap of statements can be a helpful checklist for researchers when they assess the applicability of our model in their work.

## Chapter #06: **Conclusion**

*…*in conclusion, we will reflect on why it is important to study the agenda-attention process while demonstrating applicability of our research design for capturing an agenda-snapshot of the UKs socio-economic-political priorities for posterity (specifying the government's highest and lowest priorities between May 2010 and May 2016). Furthermore, we will specify the applicability of our methodology and the *InfoAttention Marketplace* model for the existing agenda-attention theoretical frameworks.  We want to show how those associations and alignments can work in practice for future research. And finally conclude with reflections on how this type of research can evolve to co-create shared agenda-attention research.

CHAPTER #01 **ENDNOTES**

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[1] "Agenda" - our thinking and methodology are aligned with the following definitions:

[Following the evolution of the literature, Zahariadis et al. (2016; p5/6) use the term "agenda setting," which they define as "the process of turning public issues into actionable government priorities." Although, the contributors of the '*Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Setting*' have been given freedom to define terms in the way that reflects their research objectives, the term "agenda" tends to refer to "*a contextual list of actionable government priorities*."]

[2] What Is Disruptive Technology?

"Disruptive technology is an innovation that significantly alters the way that consumers, industries, or businesses operate. A disruptive technology sweeps away the systems or habits it replaces because it has attributes that are recognizably superior. Recent disruptive technology examples include e-commerce, online news sites, ride-sharing apps, and GPS systems. In their own times, the automobile, electricity service, and television were disruptive technologies. Clayton Christensen popularized the idea of disruptive technologies in The Innovator's Dilemma, published in 1997. It has since become a buzzword in startup businesses that seek to create a product with mass appeal." (last accessed on 25.01.2021: https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/disruptive-technology.asp).

[3] 'Data-Chamber' is a term that we use to identify a data source residing within the GOV.uk – both in terms of its contextual association with a specific policy cluster (for example 'Topical events') and its numerical potential (how many info-flows or pageviews we can associate with that dataset). The 'chamber' attribute asserts that we can observe supply-demand dynamics, both in isolation (how they evolve within each contextual cluster) and in comparison, with other 'data-chambers'.

[4] Zahariadis (2016; p11) argues that "*government systems are plagued by ambiguity, defined as a state of having many unclear and irreconcilable ways to interpret issues*."

[5] Schattschneider 'redefinition' of a problem (1960):

[Schattschneider was adamant that "*what happens in politics depends on the way in which people are divided into factions, parties, groups, and classes*", whereby the outcome of political games depends on which of a "*multitude of possible conflicts gains the dominant position*" (1975; p.60). Another of his contentions is that 'domineering' conflict tends to become the issues that attracts the attention of political elites and attains agenda status (1975). Therefore, one can assume that agenda-setting for Schattschneider involves establishing priorities within a competitive, democratic [conflict ridden] marketplace (1975), where losers have an incentive to "*expand the source of conflict*", as a way of advancing their agenda, while winners are keen to "*restrict them*" (1960; p.40).]

[6] Kingdon's 'primeval soup of ideas' – as described in '*Multiple streams approach: a flexible metaphor presents an opportunity to operationalize agenda setting processes*' chapter by Paul Cairney and Nikolaos Zahariadis (2016; chapter 6, p91):

Kingdon (1984, pp.131; 123) describes policy solutions whirling around in a 'policy primeval soup', 'evolving' as they are proposed by one actor then reconsidered and modified by a large number of participants. This takes place within communities of 'researchers, congressional staffers, people in planning and evaluation offices and in budget offices, academics, interest group analysts' (Kingdon, 1984, p.18). Although some solutions take off rapidly (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 72), many go through a process of 'softening' to make them acceptable within policy communities, based on criteria such as: 'technical feasibility' (will it work if implemented?); 'value acceptability within the policy community'; tolerable anticipated costs (often producing 'slimmed down' versions of ideas); public acceptability (or an important sub-set of the public); and, a 'reasonable chance for receptivity among elected decision makers' (Kingdon, 1984, pp.138–46).

# Chapter **#02**

# THE GOV.uk PLATFORM

## Digital Transformation in the UK

Since the 1990s, the *UK's* digital path has been through several different cycles as successive governments have used technology to improve or reform public services. In the process, the attention was usually on adopting technology (quick policy wins) and less so on adapting those tools within the bureaucratic system. As a result, some initiatives can end up digitising instead of reinventing the existing processes - a rather costly exercise with questionable benefits. Such 'adopt first, adapt later' approach reflects the government's interaction with *Web*-based technology and social media and is a prominent feature in decentralised systems like the *UK.* As each department and agency was allowed to pursue a different digital/web path, it is not surprising that users were unclear if they are dealing with a centralised digital government or a digitised administrative silo?

Consequently, how *ICT* is deployed to enable a cross-government public service reform can also shape how we observe policy agenda. As such, it can be challenging to determine if the technology is used as a trigger, catalyst or goal as policy objectives tend to fluctuate in response to (un)predictable nature of disruptive technology. Either way, the *UK's* 'digital-by-default'[7] strategy was not formulated overnight, as it took over 20 years for users to experience the *UK Government* in a centralised, interconnected and standardised digital context. While one cannot apply a blanketed support or criticism for using *ICT* to improve *UK* public services, we must acknowledge a divergence between ambition and delivery. While it was estimated that up to £120 billion was spent on the public sector, *IT* projects between 1997-2009. *The Office of National Statistics* suggests[8] that "product sector productivity has, in fact, declined during a period which has seen unprecedented levels of public sector expenditure, including major expenditure increases on IT" (CTPR, 2009; p.6). As such, it remains unclear if those investments have made the public sector better prepared for 21st-century opportunities and challenges. Mainly as the underlying analysis of what ought to be delivered remains unchanged since the mid-1990s: "a significant improvement in the operational efficiency, relevance and strategic effectiveness of the UK"s public services through the smart application of IT" (CTPR, 2009; p.2).

In 2009, *The Centre for Technology Policy Research (CTPR)* has reviewed 12 years of *e-Government* in the *UK*, and in their view, the *Whitehall IT* structure remained largely "outside the senior business, and policymaking forums of the public sector is a hangover of a structural model that has, by and large, existed since the late 1950s" (p.4). Equally, they highlight the importance of "implementing a more effective, holistic governance model that brings IT into

the mainstream of public services planning, design and operation rather than continuing to exist as a separate priesthood" (CTPR, 2009; p.4). Although we cannot establish if their recommendations have directly influenced the incoming *Coalition Government*, we can see that a 'digital-by-default' debate was in the public and policy domain before the 2010 *National Election.* Furthermore, the past twenty years clearly show that vision and outcome are not necessarily aligned because technology should be seen as a facilitator and not a driver for cross-government reform.

Since 1994, when the first[9] *UK* online portal (open.gov.uk ) was launched, the *UK* digital blueprint[10] was paved with numerous studies, papers, reports, strategies and initiatives by successive governments.  Even though we will not be examining this process, it is important to note that the *GOV.uk* platform did not materialise in isolation from previous attempts to align the public sector with the 'digital-by-default' *modus operandi*. As such, we could say that the *UK* digital transformation is more evolutionary as successive governments were consistent in their praise for technology-driven policies (figure 2-1):

| Year | Policy | Source |
|------|--------|--------|
| 1996 | "[technology will] provide better and more efficient services to businesses and to citizens, improve the efficiency and openness of government administration, and secure substantial cost savings for the taxpayer" | "Government Direct" [Conservative administration] |
| 1999 | "[technology will help us by making] sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to people's lives … delivering public services that are high quality and efficient." | "Modernising Government" [Labour administration] |
| 2009 | "[technology will allow] us to give citizens what they now demand: public services responsive to their needs and driven by them … it provides us with the means to deliver public services in a way that maintains their quality but brings down their cost." | "Putting the frontline first: smarter government" [Labour administration] |
| 2011 | "[technology will enable us to] deliver better public services for less cost. ICT can release savings by increasing public sector productivity and efficiency … [and] … will enable the delivery of public services in very different ways to the past." | "Government ICT Strategy" [Coalition administration] |
| 2013 | "… technology can be a powerful tool and reshape how government and citizens interact with each other … We must see digital government as a way of empowering people – service users and public sector employees, citizens and consumers – and enabling cost reduction in the process." | "Digital Britain 2015" [Labour, opposition party, announcement] |

| 2017 | "By harnessing digital to build and deliver services, the government can transform the relationship between citizen and state … putting more power in the hands of citizens and being more responsive to their needs … [we will] assemble services more quickly and at lower cost." | "Government Transformation Strategy" [Conservative administration] |

**Figure 2-1:** Digital Government and e-Government archives: Collection of political statements regarding technology's transformative power in the UK public sector reform. Source: Jerry Fishenden's technology blog (https://ntouk.wordpress.com/e-government-and-digital-government-archives/). Information was published in Thompson, M., Fishenden, J. and Brown, A.W., 2014. *Digitising Government: Understanding and Implementing New Digital Business Models*. Palgrave Macmillan Limited.

Because each *UK Government* department was operating as an independent digital entity, it also suggests that the diffusion of technological innovation and its adaptation was not equally distributed across the government. We could say that the users' interaction with *e-Government* was like playing the lottery; their experience was shaped by a department's (in)ability to provide information or deliver a specific digital service. If one was looking to make comparable observations across different departments using the same indicators (e.g., budgets or policy papers), the impact of decentralisation was self-evident as the task of finding relevant information was constrained by each site's unique configuration and knowledge management system. Although the subsequent launch of *Directgov*[11] and *BusinessLink*[12] portals (see figure 2-3) did remedy some of the impracticalities, they did not transform a network of *UK Government* websites into a networked government. We assume that the *GOV.uk* platform was established to address this issue and apply corrective measures.

## 2010 and beyond: Revolution not Evolution

Following the formation of a *Coalition Government* in May 2010, the new administration was keen to establish its digital credentials from the onset by asking *Martha Lane Fox*[13], a technology entrepreneur and a *UK Digital Champion,* to conduct a thorough review of the existing *Directgov* portal. The objective was to construct a holistic set of recommendations for the government to use the *Internet* to better communicate and interact with citizens. On 23 November 2010, *Fox* has published a report, '*Directgov 2010 and beyond: revolution not evolution'* that calls for radical improvement to government *Internet* services. In her report to *Francis Maude* (*Minister of the Cabinet Office*), it was stated that government could annually save up to £2.2 billion if 50% of contacts shifted to digital (Fox, 2010). She called for a move to

a 'service culture' and for the government to look "at more dramatic measures - such as syndicating and opening up information and services to other organisations - to be able to offer genuine improvements to consumers, taxpayers, business and citizens in the UK."[14]

This was not a standard approach to reviewing the existing government portal and offering suggestions on how to improve its operations. Instead, the recommendations provide a blueprint for how government *Internet* services could be radically transformed over the next few years. The focus was on the "interrelationship between Government use of the Internet, the need for channel shift and the future role of Directgov" (Fox, 2010; p.2). In the process, the government was advised to focus on simplifying digital practice to improve the quality of online channels and user experience:

> 1. *"Make Directgov the government front end for all departments' transactional online services to citizens and businesses, with the teeth to mandate cross government solutions, set standards and force departments to improve citizens' experience of key transactions.*
>
> 2. *Make Directgov a wholesaler as well as the retail shop front for government services & content by mandating the development and opening up of Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) to third parties.*
>
> 3. *Change the model of government online publishing, by putting a new central team in Cabinet Office in absolute control of the overall user experience across all digital channels, commissioning all government online information from other departments.*
>
> 4. *Appoint a new CEO for Digital in the Cabinet Office with absolute authority over the user experience across all government online services (websites and APIs) and the power to direct all government online spending."*
>
> (Fox, 2010; p.2)

Among other things, she has also addressed the 'branding' issue by advocating for the "adoption of a single Internet domain for central government (Fox, 2010; p.7). Two potential domains were discussed ('direct.gov.uk' and 'hmg.gov.uk') as an opportunity to refresh the government's digital identity. Even though the 'one domain' policy advocates for the consolidation of government content, it emphasises that the *Directgov* team should primarily focus on delivering transactional services while other teams should produce and manage content on sub-domains. Surprisingly, the report is open to the idea of having multiple 'front doors' into the government on the web. Such an approach could separate transactions from published information in order to compartmentalise the user's engagement. Though, Fox appears sceptical if additional top-level domain would be required, especially as "direct.gov.uk

starts with the big advantage of 28 million visitors a month and significant investment in the brand over the last few years" (Fox, 2010; p.7).

*Francis Maude* agreed in principle that "over time government should move to a single domain based on agile shared web services" (Cabinet Office, 2010; p.1). As a way forward, he planned to set up a new *Ministerial Working Group on Digital* reporting to the *Cabinet Economic Affairs Committee*. However, in the short term, he has asked his officials to immediately address specific proposals (Cabinet Office, 2010; p.1):

- *"Recruiting an Executive Director of Digital and Information in the Cabinet Office to bring together existing teams working in this area;*
- *Simplifying the governance of Directgov and ensuring that it has sufficient authority to act as the 'customer champion with teeth' to improve the user experience of digital public services;*
- *Producing a clear timetable for migrating all of Government's transactional services to Directgov;*
- *Working with departments on a timetable for the opening up of Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) as part of finalising the departmental spending settlement process;*
- *Asking Directgov and Business Link to create a plan for much closer working and sharing of resources, including the issues for customers and government that would need to be addressed if they were to converge into a single domain."*

In 2011, the *Government Digital Services (GDS)*[15] were established as a body within the *Cabinet Office* – signalling a strong political backing for digital professionals parachuted at the heart of civil service. It sent a clear message that the government intends to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on large tech companies and consultancy firms – digital was reverting to in-house operations. From the start, it was clear that the *GDS* would insistently focus on the user and their needs in the context of a 'single-domain' brand. In the process, they have brought hundreds of websites under the umbrella of a newly formed digital identity and *GOV.uk* was born. On the one hand, the *GDS* wanted to use agile approaches to advance interoperability, standardisation, and reusability. On the other hand, their objective was to revisit how government information is published before they venture into the world of centralised digital transactions.

In his blog post, *Eddie Copeland* argues that 'government as a platform[16] may be misleading because *GOV.uk* is not a place that is open to third-parties to build, innovate and share. Instead, he explains the *UK Government* approach as a *'Lego'* - "creating common building blocks that can be used in many different combinations to create different services" (2017;

p.2). Nevertheless, the *GDS* sees itself as a successful facilitator in four key areas: "(1) GOV.uk as a publishing platform, (2) the Digital Marketplace, (3) Performance (real-time data), and (4) the emergent Verify identity assurance platform" (Brown, 2017; p.7). However, we are also reminded that this strategy "appears broadly similar to the approach adopted between 1999-2010: it posits the internal identification and development of a series of interoperable, cross-Government platforms that meet common needs across areas such as identification, payments, transactions and secure messaging" (Brown, 2017; p.9).

Whether this time around things will differ depends on how the public administration responds to opportunities and constraints from its digital twin[17]. Although we still do not know if technology-enabled organisational processes automatically translate into more effective public services, we do know that it is easier to build *IT* architecture than to change human behaviour around technology. An organisational shift from 'bureaucracy-centric' to 'service-oriented' culture is much harder to achieve as elements of control and accountability are distinctly different from the private sector (Scholl, 2005). Hence why governments still run a risk of "getting pushed to the margins of a wired-up world while still relying on paper-driven processes" (Bastow et al., 2000: p.22). Although it is still early to say if *GOV.uk* would be able to accomplish where other portals and initiatives have failed, we can confidently say that platform's organisational typology has contextualised and formatted data that was previously unavailable for the agenda research. As stated in the introduction, we believe that such an *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct can help us identify actionable government priorities, compute the agenda-attention frequency, observe the (re)prioritisation order of institutional preferences, and detect the level of(miss)alignment between policy and public agendas.

## The Game Changer: GOV.uk Platform

With the adoption and adaptation of *Web*-based technology across the *UK Government*, our ability to identify, access and reformat relevant information has gradually improved. As the government is becoming more open and digital, our capacity to navigate the information commons and make more accurate agenda-related observations has improved. However, our ability to identify, access and classify data that accurately reflects the government's internal thinking continues to be a recurring impediment for the agenda research. Therefore, we should remind ourselves that technology has an operational capacity to make [digital]

government more accessible, resourceful, interactive and user-friendly. Still, it cannot resolve a primarily political issue – what to publish, when, in what format and through which channel. As such, the government's inability or unwillingness to communicate its internal agenda methodology - assuming such protocol even exists - was always the weak link in the research. In our quest to examine how the '*Open-meets-Digital*' construct can help us with the agenda research, we fast forward to 31 January 2012, the day when the *Government Digital Services (GDS)* officially launched a beta phase of the *GOV.uk* - a one-stop website[18] for the central government information and services (see figure 2-2). Surprisingly, with this act alone, our ability to decode the government's policy preferences and actionable priorities has greatly improved.  More importantly, this new strategic approach presents a conceptual shift from an *e-Government* paradigm towards 'Government as a Platform' *modus operandi*. In a series of blog posts[19], the *GDS* team argues that platforms can materialise tangible benefits for the civil service and the public as the interconnected components can resolve common problems for the departments and make services quicker, easier and cheaper to create. Subsequently, the platform is seen as a digital podium for information management and as a launchpad for new transactional services. Overall, it is perceived as an ecosystem that is centralised, standardised, interoperable and open to all. More importantly, government data – stored in different formats, duplicated and difficult to cross-reference and update – has emerged as a single most important common denominator across the *GOV.uk* system. However, the complexity of opening up and consolidating those data-silos was echoed in a *GDS* 2015 blog post[20] - asserting that government "*have bad data, not good data*". Such a bold statement also reflects their objective to unlock the data potential by making it more accessible and reusable.
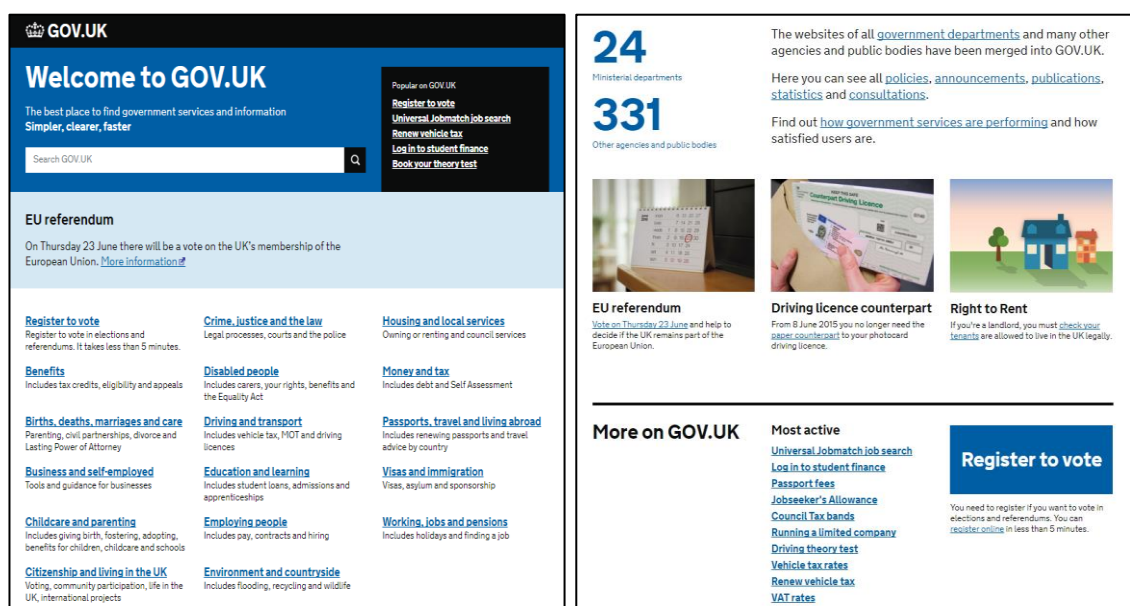


**Figure 2-2:** GOV.uk homepage – organisational layout and visual identity. Split-frame screen capture (09.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

From the policymaking perspective, *the GDS* team agrees that services built on platforms can be more flexible as they can adapt to changes in government policy and be more responsive to transboundary risks, emergencies and local events. In that context, they see policy-related services as a matrix where components can be quickly brought together when needed or dismantled swiftly when circumstances change. As such, one of the founding *GOV.uk* design rules[21] was that there should be "*no need for a user to understand the government to interact with it*". Such an adaptive approach to *GovTech*[22] is only possible because technology allows us to experiment with different prototypes before bringing services closer to policy intent. This ability to adapt to political and societal changes is conditioned by an organisational capacity to apply uniform standards across *GOV.uk* and interconnect as many elements as possible. Still, this practice[23] whereby you can "swap out the old and snap in the new. [and where] Users don't need to notice, or even be told (unless the service offered to them is changing)" highlights a disconnect between the *GDS* thinking and the concerns of a broader community (academia, *CivicTech*[24] and media) when it comes to preserving digital records for posterity and how extensive/sudden changes to *GOV.uk* information protocols and interface design can challenge our ability to monitor the government's activity sustainably.

In governance terms, *GOV.uk* has a mandate to cater to the '*Open-meets-Digital*' needs of the central government, which means that it does not host devolved *Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments*, nor the *National Health Service (NHS)*, individual hospital trusts, educational institutions (from schools to universities), or the local authorities. Instead, its objective is to bring central government departments, agencies and public bodies under a single technological, contextual and information umbrella. However, in the process of content migration[25] to *GOV.uk*, some of the entities have been retired[26] on technical grounds, and some have been granted an exemption[27] - those continue to operate as standalone websites (mostly cultural institutions and existing campaigns whose content could not be repurposed for the new platform). As of 9 May 2016, *GOV.uk* was home to 357 government entities – all the way from the *Office of the Prime Minister* to 24 *Ministerial departments* (including all the embassies and overseas posts that fall under *Foreign Office* jurisdiction) and 331 other agencies and public bodies.

It is important to note that the *GOV.uk* concept did not just emerge out of nowhere; it resulted from an evolutionary *e-path* rather than a revolutionary shift in digital policy. Foremost, it has officially replaced the pioneering *e-Government* portals *Directgov* and *BusinessLink* on 17 October 2012 (see figure 2-3 / endnotes 12 & 13). However, what sets it apart from these two sites is its comprehensive approach to centralisation, uniformity, standardisation and

interconnectivity. While the idea behind these two portals was to consolidate certain aspects of government information and expand transactional services for citizens and businesses, they were operating separately from other government websites, which means that all other departments and agencies have continued to function as standalone digital entities using different operating systems, branding, interface design and information protocols. It is unlikely that the users could experience a *Digital Government* as a unified concept when interacting with individual websites due to such a high degree of divergence on so many levels. While some departments were better at providing valuable and relevant information, others were more effective at designing digital services, but none were interconnected or interoperable.

What makes *GOV.uk* distinguishable from other digital initiatives is the level of centralisation from the operational perspective (*GDS* was established as an in-house agency). The level of standardisation and uniformity rigorously applied across the platform. Also, there is only one brand, one look and feel, one classification methodology, one user interface, one style, and above all, an integrated way of associating government entities, policies, events and locations with different info-flows. As a result, the researchers can run multiple information filters across key domains because each department has to follow a template-like approach when curating, classifying and publishing their information. Furthermore, *GOV.uk* is also actively expanding into digital services, providing more opportunities for transactional engagement with the citizens. Overall, we could say that the platform is *en route* to becoming a one-stop shop for all government information and services.



**Figure 2-3:** Direct.gov.uk and BusinessLink.gov.uk homepages - 2012 layout and visual identity indicate a transition to the GOV.uk domain (archived images retrieved on 28.02.2019). Source: Google Images search engine (www.google.co.uk/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi&authuser=0)

As the public becomes more dependent on digital services for their engagement with the government, their contact with a physical frontline bureaucrat will gradually diminish. As such, the citizens will likely start to perceive the government as a digital/web construct rather than a complex ecosystem of 'analogue' institutions and public servants operating in the realm of spatial and temporal constraints. Therefore, we could say that the launch of *GOV.uk* is a game-changer for agenda-attention research. A relatively untapped and underexplored source of new and alternative information that can help researchers identify the 'official' agenda list, track issue (re)prioritisation patterns, define agenda-shapers characteristics, and compute the frequency of institutional and public attention in relation to different topics, individual policies, events and locations.

Foremost, because agenda-related information, in addition to being open and digital, was now being organised using standardised methodology. For the first time, all the central government policies were presented within a single domain; they were grouped by topical associations and cross-referenced with departments, locations and topical events - allowing the researcher to access a large amount of data in digital format and use filters to navigate 25 different types of published information, or *info-flows* as we will continue to refer to them throughout the text. However, it is essential to note that standardised *GOV.uk* data only starts from 10 May 2010 - a date when the *Coalition Government* was officially appointed. All the previous records are being stored at the *National Archives*[28] in their original decentralised website formats. Equally, all the departments that have been rebranded or discontinued, such as the *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister,*[29] are archived under *the GOV.uk system, allowing the researchers to engage with retired content in the same format* they would with the contemporary info-flows.

It is precisely this combination of real-time observations and retroactive research that makes *GOV.uk* a potentially sustainable source of officially coded information for agenda-setting research. As resourceful as it may sound, this is not a risk-proof protocol. Any significant changes to the way info-flows are organised, displayed and more importantly, how they are associated and cross-referenced with different departments, topics, policies, events and locations could seriously disrupt the researcher's ability to make comparable observations over a more extended period – an issue that we have highlighted earlier in the text and our *Research Design* chapter.

## Mapping-out GOV.uk Platform

Before we proceed with the detailed analysis of *GOV.uk* digital characteristics, it is vital to understand the navigational routes, how the information is organised on the platform and how we can contextualise its overall *'Open-meets-Digital'* activity.

If the *Homepage* is designated to provide a quick insight without overwhelming the user, it should capture users' attention and navigate their interaction with the website's content. A well designed and organised homepage allows us to determine what type of information and services are available, how the experience is curated, what are navigational options, and how efficiently can we accomplish our task. The ability to strike a balance between interface design and knowledge management is even more critical for behemoths like *GOV.uk* that cater to different audiences.

Foremost, we must acknowledge that the *GOV.uk* design is modern, simple and consistent. The interface is relatively easy to navigate, and the background is more of a blank canvas for displayed information than a design feature itself. In comparison to news/media websites, it feels less overwhelming. Secondly, the *GOV.uk* homepage gives us a direct insight as to how the government is organising its '*Open-meets-Digital'* activity and which issues/features it wants to amplify at any given time. Even though the government may not be able to tell the citizen *how to think*, it certainly can use *GOV.uk* to inform the users *what to think about* as it can shape their perceptions by highlighting specific issues/services, providing different navigational-routes, opening up the engagement channels, interconnecting data in a particular style and by curating the policy domain.

A homepage is not just a landing page; it is also a gateway to information (structured site-map) and a marketing window (promoting top issues/services). Therefore, like every other site, the *GOV.uk* homepage is a mix of permanent and temporary content, albeit with a preference for fixed categories (main government activity does not change dramatically). To help us examine its key characteristics, we have decided to capture its layout on *9 May 2016* (a day before the end date of our research timeframe - see figure 2-4).

## GOV.uk Home Page

### SEARCH GOV.uk

[Allows the User to search the entire site]

### Popular on GOV.uk

[Top 5 most popular searches]

## SERVICES and INFORMATION

### EU referendum
On Thursday 23 June there will be a vote on the UK's membership of the European Union

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Register to vote | Crime, justice and the law | Housing and local services |
| Benefits | Disabled people | Money and tax |
| Births, deaths, marriages and care | Driving and transport | Passports, travel and living abroad |
| Business and self-employed | Education and learning | Visas and immigration |
| Childcare and parenting | Employing people | Working, jobs and pensions |
| Citizenship and living in the UK | Environment and countryside | |

## DEPARTMENTS and POLICY

| DEPARTMENTS | Policies | PERFORMANCE |
|---|---|---|
| **24** Ministerial Departments **331** Agencies & Public bodies **How government works Get involved** | **Announcements** **Publications** **Statistics** **Consultations** **Worldwide** | *how government services are performing and how many users access different departments and transactional services* |

| Window #1 'EU Referendum' | Window #2 'Driving licence counterpart' | Window #3 'Right to Rent' |
|---|---|---|

*[High-Visibility-Issues | Promotional windows | Content changes regularly]*

## MORE on GOV.uk

### Most active
*Listing 10 topical-areas with the highest level of user interaction across the site*

### Promotional-Issue box
*On this occasion, it was a call to 'Register to vote' for the Brexit referendum*

## FOOTER MENU

| **Services and information:** 16 Topical quick-links | **Departments and policy:** 6 Topical quick-links |
|---|---|
| **Reference information:** 6 categories | |

**Figure 2-4:** Contextualised GOV.uk homepage (configuration reflects content and layout as displayed on 09.05.2016. Schematics designed by M. Norderland (2017). Source: web.archive.org/web/20160509221353/http://www.gov.uk/

The *GOV.uk* homepage matrix allows us to identify five main conceptual elements that guide the platform's navigation, communication, and knowledge management:

1. ***The search*** function allows the user to conduct an autonomous search for specific information and bypass the first-level structured classification.

2. ***Promoted or amplified content*** is displayed in two distinct styles:

   a. **Government-driven** communication highlights issues and events that *GOV.uk* considers to be of greater importance for the citizens - such as the *Brexit referendum* (23 June 2016). We could say that the choice of topics/events and their life-cycle on the homepage is a form of communicative agenda-attention. Only specific issues get such a high level of visibility on the homepage itself.

   b. **User-driven** suggestions promote content that reflects the scope and scale of interaction with the website in real-time. By presenting items based on their perceived popularity (most accessed/read information) and the level of engagement (which services are most used), government mimics mainstream trends. In comparison to strategic communication, these lists are generated by the algorithms based on the user's behavioural characteristics (an example of how public agenda is translated within the open/digital domain).

3. ***Services and information*** are presented in the form of a topical directory. In the process, the *GDS* has decided to highlight seventeen categories that may be most relevant for the public. They range from voter registration to benefits, education, driving and employment. By clicking on a specific topic, the user is then given an option to refine its search by selecting the most appropriate options until they can find the same information/service. Such a structured approach to issue segmentation communicates two essential characteristics: (1) it shows layer-by-layer how government organises its activity; and (2) what information/services are available for the users.

4. ***Departments and policy*** cluster has three distinct functions: (1) to provide access to all the government departments/agencies that are hosted on *GOV.uk*; (2) to help a user navigate the policy domain by listing all the policies, announcements, publications, statistics and consultations; and (3) to communicate portal's performance by using the web analytics data. In essence, this cluster is the epicentre of policymaking as it allows

us to examine the scope and scale of associations among different policy elements and their respective agenda-setters.

5. *Reference information* is the least prominent feature on the homepage. It is more about (1) technical information relating to the site, the *GDS* webmaster, terms and conditions; and (2) how to use the 'help' feature or switch to the *Welsh* language pages.

Now that we have a better understanding of how information is organised and how institutional (supply of information/services) and public (need for information/services) agendas converge on the platform, we can identify *Departments and Policy* cluster as the focus of our research as we seek to highlight the *Agenda-Shapers* and contextualise *UKs* policy platform and the agenda-continuum.

### *Mainstream – Specialist – Whitehall navigation*

In July 2014, *Mark Hurrell*, a member of the *GDS* team, published a blog post[30] about *GOV.uk* navigation and how the information architecture was developed to accommodate different content while catering to multiple user groups. As such, the *GDS* maintains three key content areas which continue to shape its conceptual, navigational and organisational frameworks – they are branded as *Mainstream, Specialist* and *Whitehall* in reference to their respective audiences:

- *MAINSTREAM content* is catering to the general public and is organised by tasks – for example, '*School admissions and transport to school*' or '*Your rights at work and trade unions*'.

- *SPECIALIST content* is curated for professionals (e.g., policy analyst, accountant, regulation specialist, or business owner) who specialize in specific policy areas. As such, it was essential to align the knowledge with policy-specific categories.

- *WHITEHALL content* is curated and organised by a publisher (a department). However, according to *GDS* analytics, the subject-based navigation in this domain remains mostly ignored by the users. Still, the functionality remains as citizens ought to see which department is involved with policy topic, events and locations.

While reflecting on the process, *Hurrell* admits that in the initial stages of transition, the three areas were developed somewhat autonomously from each other. That allowed the *GDS* team to focus on the specific audiences' needs and the type of content they knew already existed. Admittedly, as the platform went live, the *GDS* did not know how users would react and behave once the government moved to a single webpage. Therefore, rather than creating a speculative scenario for every policy domain or transactional service, they have decided to build a basic platform, monitor users' behavioural characteristics and adapt accordingly. While the *GOV.uk* platform will always retain its foundational principles, as technology continues to evolve, users' expectations become more refined, and modern policymaking becomes interactive. There is no doubt that *GOV.uk* will be in a perpetual cycle of change to maintain its relevance. To explain how the choice of a navigation route can display different orientation for the same topic, *Hurrell* used the example of how the search for *Schools* could provide the users with three distinct options to choose from:

- **Mainstream** navigation:      gov.uk/browse/education/school-life
- **Specialist** navigation:      gov.uk/schools-colleges
- **Whitehall** navigation:      gov.uk/government/topics/schools

It is important to note that even though each of these paths will curate users' experience reflecting their needs and expectations, they will be prevented from seeing the whole picture. On the contrary, the very foundation of interconnected info-flows allows any user to access the digital and open information across the *GOV.uk* platform. While having different navigational routes is an effective way of accomplishing a task, it is also important not to underestimate how navigation can influence people's perceptions about specific topics.

### Communicative vs Transactional Role

Based on our organisational and navigational analysis of the *GOV.uk* framework, we can conclude that the platform has three distinct roles:

**The informative role** is set to explain how government works, who runs it and how it is organised – its mandate incorporates, but is not limited to, the following elements:
- host and promote central government departments, agencies and public bodies within a uniform framework of a single website;
- provide a standardised platform for agents to publish, organise, classify, interlink and distribute respective info-flows;
- act as depository of government's knowledge and preserve institutional memory; *and*

- mainstream the policymaking process.

**The interactive role** is set to expand the citizens' opportunities to engage with the government and enable the *GDS* to move towards the *Open Policy* concept[31] to animate and sustain public interaction with the public sector. In particular by:

- promoting direct participation through public consultations, open-feedback on webpages and blogs, and *e-Petitions;*[32]
- expanding the government's ability to establish direct, strategic and interactive communication with citizens by adopting social media channels, publishing blog posts and customising user's information updates via email alerts; *and*
- advancing transparency through the open display of *GOV.uk* performance and user satisfaction in the form of real-time web analytics.

**The transactional role** is set to provide a wide range of digital services to the public as part of a more considerable effort to make the government and its procedures more user-friendly, less bureaucratic, more cost-effective and operationally more efficient - from filing tax returns to applying for documents and searching for jobs.

Although, each navigation route, role, actor and dataset are worthy of in-depth analysis, we have to be more focused and select *GOV.uk* attributes that can help us test the proposed *InfoAttention Marketplace* framework. Based on our research objectives and proposed methodology we will be focusing on the following elements (see figures 2-5 and 2-6):

- **Whitehall** navigational route – because published content (25 different 'info-flows') is curated and organised by the observed departments (agenda-shapers).

- **Departments and Policy** organisational cluster:
  - 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments
  - 47 policy areas
  - 219 policies
  - 49 topical events
  - 237 locations

- **GOV.uk Informative** role as we want to know what the selected *Government* agenda-setters are communicating and publishing across the platform (type and number of info-flows).
- **GOV.uk Interactive** role as we seek to define public agenda-attention through their interaction with the portal by analysing the web-traffic analytics as part of the *Performance* section (e.g., number of pageviews).

## ORGANISATION

**DEPARTMENTS** (n357)

| 2 | 24 | 331 |
|---|---|---|
| Office of the PM and DPM | Ministerial Departments | Agencies & Public Bodies |

**PERFORMANCE**

GOV.uk dashboard for Ministerial departments *(who visits/clicks what, how and when)*

**HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS**

| Who runs government | How government is run | History of government |
|---|---|---|

**GET INVOLVED**

| Engage with government | Take part |
|---|---|
| Respond to consultations | Volunteer; National Citizen Service; Help run a charity; Set up a new school; Protect a local building; Become a councillor and etc… |
| Start a petition | |
| Follow a blog or social media channel | |

## POLICYMAKING

**POLICIES**

| n47 | n219 | n49 |
|---|---|---|
| Policy Areas | Individual Policies | Topical Events |

**WORLDWIDE**

| n237 |
|---|
| Locations |

## INFO-FLOWS

| **Publications** (n18) | | **Statistics** (n1) | **Announcements** (n6) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Consultations** | | Statistics | Fatality notices | |
| *All consultations:* | | | Government responses | |
| Open consultations | | | News stories | |
| Closed consultations | | | Press releases | |
| **Corporate** | | | Speeches | |
| Corporate reports | | | Statements | |
| FOI releases | | | | |
| Transparency data | | | | |
| **Policy & Guidance** | | | | |
| Correspondence | Impact Assessments | Policy papers | | |
| Guidance | Independent reports | | | |
| **Other** | | | | |
| Decisions | Forms | | | |
| International treaties | Maps | | | |
| Notices | Promotional material | | | |
| Regulations | | | | |
| **Research** | | | | |
| Research & analysis | | | | |

**Figure 2-5:** Contextualising 'Communicative' aspect of the GOV.uk operations for our Research Design (based on 09.05.2016 content and organisational framework). Red-frames indicate the segments that will be observed in our study. Source: www.GOV.uk

**Figure 2-6:** GOV.uk screenshots: Policies – Publications – Announcements - Worldwide landing pages.
Source: www.GOV.uk

## The GOV.uk Digital Characteristics

Compared to other countries, *Britain* is trending positively in the league tables when it comes to *Internet* availability[33], affordability[34], relevance[35] and readiness[36], which suggests that *GOV.uk*, as a platform, is well placed to capture and sustain a significant digital following. Therefore, if we observe *GOV.uk* web-traffic[37] data in the context of broader societal patterns, we may assert that a large majority of the *UK* population has access to the *Internet*, can interact with essential digital information/services, and is willing to engage with the government in a non-analogue context. Knowing that the *GOV.uk* audience is not an isolated digital minority allows us to observe users' visits and pageviews across the platform as a barometer of public attentiveness to individual departments, policies, topical events and worldwide locations. Since its launch, each visit to *GOV.uk* and every click has been recorded by the *GDS* analytics software - gradually building a vast repository of information about users' preferences and behavioural characteristics across the platform. As such, the government is in a unique position to translate users' digital footprint and behavioural characteristics on the site as a form of (in)direct feedback by monitoring citizens' interests and orientation in real-time. Therefore, *GOV.uk* web-traffic analytics can be used to formulate the public agenda (*what people want to think about*) and help us construct our *Detector* domain – a *Demand-input* for information.

The phrase '*if you build it, they will come*' may not work for every *Internet* start-up, but it may be 100% applicable to the *GOV.uk* platform. Foremost, because the public sector does not operate as a free market, it has a monopoly over this domain. If you want to obtain official publication, verify the digital identity or conduct a transaction with the government, you have no choice but to access their official [digital] channels. Therefore, *GOV.uk* will always attract and sustain a large following, and as more of its services shift online, those numbers will only increase. In those terms, the classic *supply-and-demand* marketplace dynamics may not be as applicable as they are in the private sector due to a lack of external competition. However, for as long as the government continues to supply relevant info-flows, communicates its agenda and expand digital services, the users will continue to engage with the platform. It does not necessarily mean that the government supply of information will match the public demand for its content or vice versa. Even without data analysis, it would be fair to say that the institutional and public agendas are not always in sync with particular issues or events.

To help us reflect on *GOV.uk* digital characteristics and how they compare with the *Internet* industry standards, we will turn to *Alexa.com*[38], a global pioneer in the world of analytical

insight. Even though *Alexa.com* was retired on 1 May 2022, at the time of our research, the site was fully functioning, and the majority of data was paywall protected. As we have expressed strong preference to using open, accessible (no fees) and digital data, we have decided not to unlock the premium service which holds the historical data. Fortunately, *Alexa* provides a small (no-pay-wall) data sample sufficient for our basic digital audit -- allowing us to assess elementary *GOV.uk* performance and its key rankings.

Before we proceed with the analysis, it is important to state that the (free-of-charge) *Alexa* data was only available in the context of a contemporary timeframe. It means that If we are to access data after 10 May 2016, we will get an accurate picture of *GOV.uk* about that particular date (+/- three months/weeks), which is outside our research timeframe. Those constraints limit our ability to determine whether *GOV.uk* external characteristics have changed over time or whether they have remained relatively stable. Even though we found a way to bypass this obstacle by using a *WayBackMachine*[39] tool to retrieve *Alexa.com* archived pages; we were not able to locate cached records for each year in our timeframe, which means that we have to analyse available data in the context of three specific dates in 2012, 2015 and 2016. Though we are missing two representative samples; we feel confident that collated information is sufficient for our analysis as its relevant to the most significant years in our timeframe: (1) 2012 - the launch of *GOV.uk*; (2) 2015 - the end of the *Coalition Government;* and (3) 2016 - the first year of the *Conservative Government*.

To help us decouple *GOV.uk* characteristics regarding its digital performance and audience engagement, we have decided to adopt *Alexa.com* organisational framework and observe data in the context of nine topical categories (see figure 2-7). In this way, we will highlight critical patterns, observe their change in sequential context (2012-2015-2016), and compare some of the results to the *Internet* industry standards. Overall, we hope to determine whether these patterns remain relatively stable over the years or whether they are fluid.

### #1: So, if not at the top 15, where can we find GOV.uk?

Even though we can agree that *GOV.uk* will never be the next *Google*, *Facebook* or *Amazon* for popularity and web-traffic; we are nevertheless surprised to detect the platform's relatively high ranking compared to other websites. Even in 2012, ten months into its beta-launch, *GOV.uk* was trending at respectful #191 place in the *UK* and #15,367 worldwide. However, as we fast forward to 2015/16, we can detect a significant shift in its relative importance as the platform could reach and remain prominent at the #26 spot. Correspondingly, we can reflect a

## T#1: Alexa Traffic Ranks: How is this site ranked relative to other sites?

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| Global rank: **15,367** | Global rank: **880** | Global rank: **673** |
| UK rank: **191** | UK rank: **26** | UK rank: **26** |

***Global rank:** The rank is calculated using a combination of average daily visitors to this site and pageviews on this site over the past three months. The site with the highest combination of visitors and pageviews is ranked #1.

***Country rank:** is calculated using a combination of average daily visitors to this site and pageviews on this site from users from that country over the past month. The site with the highest combination of visitors and pageviews is ranked #1 in that country.

## T#2: Audience Geography: Where are this site's visitors located? (Top 5 countries)

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| **United Kingdom (82.2%)** | **United Kingdom (74.5%)** | **United Kingdom (75.3%)** |
| India (1.6%) | United States (4.4%) | United States (3.3%) |
| United States (1.4%) | India (3.2%) | India (2.9%) |
| Brazil (1.3%) | Spain (0.9%) | Nigeria (1.2%) |
| Spain (1.1%) | Russia (0.9%) | Spain (0.9%) |

## T#3: How engaged are visitors to www.gov.uk?

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| Bounce Rate: **44.30%** | Bounce Rate: **36.50%** | Bounce Rate: **39.20%** |
| Daily Pageviews per Visitor: **2.98** | Daily Pageviews per Visitor: **3.22** | Daily Pageviews per Visitor: **3.26** |
| Daily Time on Site: **2:20** | Daily Time on Site: **2:60** | Daily Time on Site: **2:56** |

***Bounce Rate** is the percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.

## T#4: Search Traffic: What percentage of visits to this site come from a search engine?

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| **23.73%** | **24.80%** | **22.70%** |

## T#5: Upstream Sites: Which top 5 sites did people visit immediately before this site?

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| No data | **Google.co.uk (34.1%)** | **Google.co.uk (36.2%)** |
| | Google.com (10.2%) | Service.gov.uk (7.1%) |
| | Service.gov.uk (4.2%) | Google.com (6.5%) |
| | Hmrc.gov.uk (4.1%) | Bing.com (5.2%) |
| | Yahoo.com (2.1%) | Yahoo.com (2.9%) |

## T#6: Top 5 Keywords from Search Engines: Which search keywords send traffic to this site?

| 13.11.2012 | 03.03.2015 | 28.04.2016 |
|---|---|---|
| **Gov.uk (6.50%)** | **Companies house (3.02%)** | **Universal jobmatch (3.30%)** |
| Next bank holiday (3.22%) | Hmrc (2.15%) | Dvla (2.62%) |
| Gov uk (3.06%) | Universal jobmatch (1.78%) | Student finance (1.10%) |
| When do clocks change (2.60%) | Dvla (1.66%) | www.gov.uk/vehicletax (1.09%) |
| UK bank holidays (1.97%) | Student finance (0.86%) | Hmrc login (0.81%) |

**Figure 2-7:** GOV.uk digital characteristics table – based on Alexa.com data. Historical information for three time-samples was accessed using the Web Archive cached pages (The WayBackMachine web tool). 'Global vs UK Ranking' was compiled using data from one time-sample (28.04.2016). Source: Alexa.com and Web.Archive.org

similar international trajectory, as *GOV.uk* moves into the cluster of top 1,000 global websites (#880 in 2015 and #673 in 2016). Somehow, its international standing is even more impressive if we consider how many millions of websites currently exist globally. Overall, the ranking patterns suggest that the website is gradually becoming a *UK* household name and an international [policy] brand. More individuals are aware of its existence, purpose and potential. One may assume that as more government services expand into the digital realm, we may even see *GOV.uk* at the apex of the *UK* digital commons (at the top 15 websites).

### #2: Audience geography

The primary objective of *GOV.uk* is to cater to the needs and interest of the *British* public; as such, it is not surprising that the majority of the audience originates from within the *UK*. However, it is interesting to observe that the *UK*-based numbers are not as solid or stable as one would anticipate. While being at a comfortable 82.2% in 2012, the proportion of the home audience slips back to around 75% for the 2015/16 period. Which poses an interesting question – where are the remaining 25% of users based? As we only have data for the top 5 locations, including the *UK*, we can only reflect on the relatively small sample. For example, in our 03.03.2015 sample, the *UK* share was around 74.5%, and the other four locations were responsible for 9.4% of the general audience (the USA 4.4%; India 3.2%; Spain 0.9% and Russia 0.9%). It means that 83.9% of the *GOV.uk* audience was associated with five locations (UK+4), and the remaining 16.1% of users could come from any other country (noting that none of those locations were solely responsible for more than 0.9% of the audience).

Furthermore, we can tell that the *United States, India* and *Spain* are present in all three time-samples. Although their percentages fluctuate, on average, their combined share of audience is 4.1% (2012), 8.5% (2015) and 7.1% (2016). In the scheme of things, international numbers are relatively high. Still, one assumes that a lot of that traffic can be attributed to the *British* nationals living abroad, which reintroduces 'catering to the national audience' context back into the equation. These numbers can also be observed as an attention barometer – how relevant is the *UK* to the global audience? What type of information is in demand?

### #3: How engaged are GOV.uk visitors?

In addition to attracting users, websites are very keen to keep them engaged on their sites for as long as possible. In certain terms, this is probably even more valuable than the number of visitors, especially when you have a situation where most visitors to the site do not engage

with content purposefully. Such imbalance between volume and quality of interaction can create a sense of false success. *Web* traffic alone is not enough to sustain the portal's relevance, justify its purpose or maintain its ranking position. To help us test *GOV.uk* characteristic in this domain, we will focus on three key variables:

1. ***Bounce Rate*** is an important indicator, as it computes a percentage of visitors who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page. At first, we may think that the average 'bounce-rate' of 40% for all three time-samples is relatively high - with the highest in 2012 (44.30%) and lowest in 2015 (36.50%). However, if we look at these rates in the context of the *Internet* industry standards,[40] we are told that anything under 40% is an excellent result, which indicates a well-built site that meets user needs. If applicable, this would suggest that *GOV.uk* has a relatively low 'bounce-rate', and if we take into account that users come to the platform to accomplish a particular task and not to 'surf' government flows, it means that a majority of *GOV.uk* users are not accidental visitors.

2. ***Daily Pageviews per Visitor:*** now that we know that the 'bounce-rate' is relatively low, it would be interesting to know the daily pageviews[41] per visitor. If we average the results from all three-time samples, it seems that a visitor to *GOV.uk* will, on average, access 3.1 pages during its daily visit. Whether that is a sufficient number or not is hard to answer as each website is different, and it all comes down to the user's needs and the websites' capacity to stimulate engagement with its content. It is challenging to locate generic industry standards that could tell us if *GOV.uk* is trending high or low in this domain. However, these numbers suggest that those visitors who extend their engagement on *GOV.uk* tend to require 3+ pages to accomplish their task.

3. ***Daily Time on Site:*** whether the user's objective is to focus on a single page or to seek orientation across multiple pages is irrelevant if the time dedicated to that engagement is too long or too short. On the one hand, if one spends less time on the site, it may suggest that they could find the information quickly; on the other hand, if the presence is extended, it could signal that digital service interaction is not as user-friendly as initially anticipated. While averaging 'daily-time' numbers can help us understand how the attention is spread, it cannot tell us why that may be the case without digging deeper into the analytics. Nevertheless, we can observe this category in the context of an average *British* citizen who in 2015 has spent[42] 2 hours and 51 minutes per day actively using the *Internet* at home, school and work. So, on the one end of the spectrum, we have a user who is willing to dedicate on average 171 minutes of each day to digital activity. On the other end, we have many websites, social media channels and mobile applications competing for their share of attention. Therefore, if we average our time samples, we can

claim that a daily visitor to *GOV.uk* spends an average of 2:45 minutes on the site – from the lowest 2:20 in 2012 to the highest 2:60 span in 2015. In generalised terms, that would mean that 1.43% of the individual's daily digital attention could be designated to *GOV.uk*. Such a small percentage suggests that the UK Government is not a daily priority, especially when we know that the same user is prepared to dedicate up to 50 minutes (29.2%) of its daily attention to *Facebook*[43] alone.

### *#4: Search traffic and #5: Upstream sites*

While some users go directly to *GOV.uk*, most are referred to the platform by a third-party site/channel. As such, we would assume that majority of the population will use a search engine to frame their orientation. In contrast, others may follow a referral link from news stories, social media messages, blog posts and other digital outlets. It is useful to highlight a percentage of visits to *GOV.uk* that come from search engines. If we look at our time samples, we know that the highest rate was achieved in 2015 (24.80%) and lowest in 2016 (22.70%), but the average result for all three samples was around 23.74%.  These results suggest that 3/4 of referrals to *GOV.uk* are based on direct arrivals to the platform and/or are aided by a myriad of other digital intermediaries that are not defined as search engines.

For the time being, *Alexa.com* data suggests that the search engines, as a block, are one of the driving forces when it comes to external referral to *UK Government* platform. However, when we look at top sites that people have visited before accessing *GOV.uk*, we can tell that not all search engines play an equal role in establishing this link. Foremost, we must note that we only have data for 2015 and 2016 samples and that rankings are limited to only the top five sites (all other information is not accessible due to paywall restrictions). Quick calculations point out that the top five sites account for between 54.7% (2015) and 57.9% (2016) of all the referral sites – these sites were the last point of reference for most of the audience before landing on *GOV.uk*.  When we look at the list, we can see that *Google* leads the way with a 44.5% market share and that *Google.co.uk* is the preferred choice for the *British* audience over more generic *Google.com* search domain. While only ¼ of the overall referrals come from the search engines, many users tend to access *Google* before visiting the *GOV.uk* platform.

### *#6: Which search keywords send traffic to GOV.uk?*

The ultimate quest in web-traffic analytics is to know what people are exploring – their single point of interest and which keywords they use to frame their search. As one could imagine, that is a vast data field that we cannot possibly address, but we can briefly look at the top five

keywords that people use in search engines to access content on *GOV.uk* (more detailed data is paywall protected). We begin by combining a market share results for top five keywords: 2012 = 17.35%; 2015 = 9.47%; and 2016 = 8.92%. Such a drastic change between 2012 and 2015/16 samples is quite striking. Still, the quick analysis points out that a novelty of *GOV.uk* as a website and keyword terminology in 2012 may be a reason behind such surge of public interest as 9.56% of keywords in that sample were related to two variations of the platform's name. If we subtract those two keywords, the remaining share of 7.79% would be more closely aligned with the 2015/16 samples. These patterns suggest that most visitors tend to use specific keywords to access relevant information and, in the process, bypass the *GOV.uk* home page. In the following pages, we would test this assertion by looking at *GOV.uk* web-traffic data as we seek to understand how many people begin their interaction from the *GOV.uk* home page. Furthermore, we can detect the top three keywords that appear both in 2015 and 2016 samples: *Universal jobmatch, DVLA* (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) and the *HMRC* (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs). When we look at all three samples, we could say that the wider *British* public appears to be mostly concerned with the job search, bank holidays, companies house, student finances, paying their taxes and/or registering their vehicles.

While *GOV.uk* concept, its outputs and performance have their supporters and critics, our objective is not to debate whether the government's open/digital strategy, policy branding, interface design and/or knowledge management is best suited for what is set to accomplish. Instead, we would like to acknowledge that this '*Open-meets-Digital'* platform has provided us with a sustainable source of officially coded information that can be observed retroactively or in real-time by using comparable associations with topics, policies, locations, departments and different types of info-flows – collectively forming our *Effector* domain - a *Supply-output* of government information.

Whereas a *Detector* domain *(*a *Demand-input* – what citizens proactively seek on *GOV.uk)* can be decoded by observing the web-traffic analytics published by the *GDS* as part of their performance[44] transparency. Considering the scope and scale of the *GOV.uk* site, it would be an immense undertaking to make the web-traffic analytics for every info-flow available for public access and scrutiny. In addition to technical constraints, most GOV.uk users are simply not interested in such data – it is mostly the social scientist who finds it of extreme value when computing the public agenda (what people want to think about and how they are proactively seeking that information). Therefore, we intend to recalibrate users' behavioural characteristics and search patterns on *GOV.uk* (number of visitors and page views) as an

indicator of public attentiveness across the platform. An approach that we feel is less biased and more insightful than traditional forms of (de)coding public opinion.

As such, we believe that *GOV.uk*, as an example of the '*Open-meets-Digital'* construct, presents a unique opportunity for agenda-setting research with its market-like supply and demand dynamics. In addition to lowering the entry barriers for researchers (data is open and digital), *GOV.uk* content provides an accurate depiction of the government's communicative-agenda (what they want you to know about actionable government priorities). The ability to record users' behavioural characteristics across the *GOV.uk* platform (what the public wants to think about) can be identified and utilised as a new data-chamber for future agenda research.

As we are not observing the *GOV.uk* as a typical government portal, we believe that published info-flows represent a valuable '*research-currency*' – what government says, in what format and when - is relevant when decoding issue priorities and the frequency of the agenda-attention. Also, in terms of accessing digital services, users have no choice but to go to *GOV.uk* to engage in transactional activity with the central government. In contrast, the publics' intention to engage with specific info-flow content (informative lens) is less conditioned and more reflective of their broader interests, needs and priorities at the time.

Therefore, it may be appropriate to contextualise the *GOV.uk* as '*InfoAttention Marketplace'* – a space where an open *Supply* of digitised government info-flows meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open information. This approach will allow us to focus on the 'actionable' agenda issues/events, which means that we only observe issues that have already found their way onto the official agenda-continuum. As stated previously, we are not interested in how they got selected; we are keen to understand how the frequency of agenda-attention (re)prioritises actionable government priorities. In order to accomplish that mission, we need to map out the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace*. First, we need to explain which *GOV.uk* information and organisational typology will formulate our research design. Once we have clearly defined 'data-chambers', we can present elements responsible for the *InfoAttention Marketplace* dynamics. We envision this construct as a combination of several interconnected elements and processes that can be observed independently from each other and collectively when we need to form the 'big picture'. Therefore, our proposed methodology allows the researchers to focus on different agenda-shapers and policy domains when establishing the agenda-attention frequency, ranking priority of actionable government priorities and the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas.

CHAPTER #02 **ENDNOTES**

[7] 'Government Digital Strategy': "This strategy sets out how the government will become digital by default. It fulfils the commitment we made in the Civil Service Reform Plan. By digital by default, we mean digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded." Published in November 2012 by the Cabinet Office (last accessed on 05.02.2021:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/296336/Government_Digital_Stratetegy_-_November_2012.pdf).

[8] Wasted billions of government IT spending exposed Quills and abacuses cheaper, possibly more efficient. Article by Christopher Williams (06.08.2009) for The Register. (last accessed on 10.02.2021:
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/08/06/gov_it_waste/).

[9]Government Information Service (GIS) launched the first *UK* online portal (open.gov.uk ) in November 1994. The objective was to host over 400 public sector organisations and provide relevant information – initially attracting 200,000 hits a day. Published on Jerry Fishenden's technology blog on 05.11.2014 (last accessed on 15.01.2021: https://ntouk.wordpress.com/2014/11/05/happy-20th-anniversary-online-government/).

[10] Digital Government and e-Government Archives: "This is a living, curated list of documents and links related to the UK Government e-government and digital government initiatives since the early 1990s. Some links are provided where documents are not applicable." (last accessed on 05.02.2021:
https://ntouk.wordpress.com/e-government-and-digital-government-archives/).

[11] Directgov was the UK government's digital service – it provided a single point of access to public sector information and services. The site was replaced by the GOV.uk website on 17.10.2012. (last accessed 19.09.2012: https://web.archive.org/web/20120919081831/http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm).

[12] Business Link - was a UK government-funded business advice and guidance service in England. It consisted of an online portal managed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and a national telephone helpline. The site was replaced by the new GOV.UK website on 17.10.2012, with the old websites redirecting to the new.
(last accessed 20.09.2012:
https://web.archive.org/web/20120920062810/http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/home?domain=www.businesslink.gov.uk&target=http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/).

[13] Martha Lane Fox is a British businesswoman, philanthropist and public servant. She co-founded Last Minute during the dotcom boom of the early 2000s and has subsequently served on public service digital projects."
(last accessed on 09.02.2021: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Lane_Fox).

[14] UK Government Press release - Digital by default proposed for government services: "Public services should be delivered online or by other digital means, the government has announced in response to a report by Martha Lane Fox." Published on 23.11.2010 (Last accessed on 07.01.2021:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-by-default-proposed-for-government-services)

[15] GDS blog post: "Government Digital Services (GDS) is leading digital transformation across the UK government. It has created GOV.uk and it overseas its operations" (last accessed on:
https://gds.blog.gov.uk/about/).

[16] GDS blog post: 'Government as a platform.' Posted by Felicity Singleton on 07.10.2015 (last accessed on 29.02.2019: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2015/10/07/government-as-a-platform-for-the-rest-of-us/).

[17] Digital Twin – IBM definition: "…is a virtual representation of an object or system that spans its lifecycle, is updated from real-time data, and uses simulation, machine learning and reasoning to help decision-making." (last accessed on 07.06.2022: https://www.ibm.com/uk-en/topics/what-is-a-digital-twin)

[18] About GOV.uk: "GOV.UK is the website for the UK government. It's the best place to find government services and information. The site is maintained by the Government Digital Service (GDS)." (last accessed on 05.08.2017: https://www.gov.uk/help/about-govuk)

[19] Government as a platform GOV.uk blog (last accessed on 26.02.2019: https://governmentasaplatform.blog.gov.uk/).

[20] GDS blog post: 'Government as a platform.' Posted by Felicity Singleton on 07.10.2015 (last accessed on 29.02.2019: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2015/10/07/government-as-a-platform-for-the-rest-of-us/).

[21] GDS blog post: 'A few design rules for Alpha.gov.uk'. Posted by Richard Pope on 28.04.2011 (last accessed on 24.02.2019: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2011/04/28/alpha-gov-uk-design-rules/).

[22] GovTech – World Bank Group definition: "GovTech is a whole of government approach to public sector modernization. GovTech emphasizes three aspects of public sector modernization: citizen-centric public services that are universally accessible, a whole-of-government approach to digital government transformation, and simple, efficient and transparent government systems. (last accessed on 07.06.2022: https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/govtech)

[23] GDS blog post: 'Government as a platform.' Posted by Felicity Singleton on 07.10.2015 (last accessed on 29.02.2019: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2015/10/07/government-as-a-platform-for-the-rest-of-us/).

[24] CivicTech – Government Technology definition: "Civic tech is technology that enables greater participation in government or otherwise assists government in delivering citizen services and strengthening ties with the public. Some use "civic tech" as a catch-all term to explain all technologies related to the public sector and civic life, but "government technology" is a more apt term for that broader category. Civic tech is where the public lends its talents, usually voluntarily, to help government do a better job." (last accessed on 07.06.2022: https://www.govtech.com/civic/what-is-civic-tech.html)

[25] GDS Blog post: 'Transition – it's back!' Posted by Robert Rockstroh on 23.01.2017 (last accessed on 08.08.2017: https://insidegovuk.blog.gov.uk/2017/01/23/transition-its-back/).

[26] Guidance document 'GOV.uk Proposition' - helps people to decide if part or all of their planned publishing should be on GOV.uk or not, published on 17.06.2014: (last accessed on 08.08.2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/govuk-proposition).

[27] Cabinet Office transparency data 'List of central government open websites: October 2016' published on 02.11.2016 (last accessed on 08.08.2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564729/List_of_central_government_open_websites_-_July_-_Sept_2016_CSV_Format.csv/preview).

[28] The National Archives: UK Government Web Archive: "We capture, preserve, and make accessible UK central government information published on the web. The web archive includes videos, tweets, images and websites dating from 1996 to present." (last accessed on 03.01.2020: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/webarchive/).

[29] The Deputy Prime Minister's Office 2010-2015 (last accessed on 15.05.2016: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/deputy-prime-ministers-office). The Rt Hon Nick Clegg "served as Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Privy Council from May 2010 to May 2015. He was elected the Liberal Democrat MP for Sheffield Hallam in 2005." (last accessed on: 15.05.2016: https://www.gov.uk/government/people/nick-clegg).

[30] 'Improving GOV.UK's navigation' a blog post by Mark Hurrell published on 'Inside GOV.uk' blog (15.07.2014) (last accessed on 25.02.2019: https://insidegovuk.blog.gov.uk/2014/07/15/improving-gov-uks-navigation/).

[31] GDS Blog post: 'Open Policy Making and Digital - a happy coupling' Posted by Rob Banathy on 22.05.2014 (last accessed on 12.10.2020: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/05/22/open-policy-making-and-digital-a-happy-coupling/).

[32] Petitions - UK Government and Parliament (last accessed on: 12.09.2019: https://petition.parliament.uk/).

[33] 'The Inclusive Internet: Mapping Progress 2017' index by the Economist Intelligence Unit  Availability - this category examines the quality and breadth of the available infrastructure required for access and levels of Internet usage (last accessed on 19.09.2017: https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/assets/external/downloads/3i-bridging-digital-divides.pdf).

[34] 'The Inclusive Internet: Mapping Progress 2017' index by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Affordability - this category examines the cost of access relative to income and competition level in the Internet marketplace (last accessed on 19.09.2017: https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/assets/external/downloads/3i-bridging-digital-divides.pdf).

[35] 'The Inclusive Internet: Mapping Progress 2017' index by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Relevance - this category examines the existence and extent of local language content and relevant content (last accessed on 19.09.2017: https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/assets/external/downloads/3i-bridging-digital-divides.pdf).

[36] 'The Inclusive Internet: Mapping Progress 2017' index by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Readiness - this category examines the capacity to access the Internet, including skills, cultural acceptance, and supporting policy (last accessed on 19.09.2017: https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/assets/external/downloads/3i-bridging-digital-divides.pdf).

[37] Activity on GOV.UK: web traffic, based on data from Google Analytics (last accessed on 10.02.2021: https://www.gov.uk/performance/site-activity).

[38] Alexa.com "was founded in 1996 and is a global pioneer in the world of analytical insight. Alexa's traffic estimates are based on data from their global traffic panel (a sample of millions of Internet users using one of many different browser extensions). Alexa global traffic rank is a measure of how a website is doing relative to all other sites on the web over the past three months. The rank is calculated using a proprietary methodology that combines a site's estimated average of daily unique visitors and its estimated number of pageviews over the past three months. Alexa provides a similar country-specific ranking, which is a measurement of how a website ranks in a particular country relative to other sites over the past month."

Data in our tables (three time-samples) was retrieved using the WayBackMachine portal (www.webarchive.org) - we have used data that was closest to our research end date (10.05.2016):
- Top 15 Global Websites (29.04.2016): https://web.archive.org/web/20160429113536/http://www.alexa.com/topsites
- Top UK Websites (27.04.2016): https://web.archive.org/web/20160427214840/https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/GB
- GOV.uk key attributes – we could only retrieve archives for three years:
  - 13.11.2012: https://web.archive.org/web/20121113074352/https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/www.gov.uk
  - 03.03.2015: https://web.archive.org/web/20150303000832/www.alexa.com/siteinfo/www.gov.uk
  - 28.04.2016 https://web.archive.org/web/20160428043856/https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/www.gov.uk

Please note that Alexa.com was retired by Amazon (its new owner) on 1 May 2022 (last accessed on 07.06.2022: https://alexa.com/)

[39] WayBackMachine web-tool for cached webpages: "The Internet Archive, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, we provide free access to researchers, historians, scholars, the print disabled, and the general public. Our mission is to provide Universal Access to All Knowledge." (last accessed on 10.02.2021: https://archive.org/about/).

[40] The Rocket Blog: 'What's the Average Bounce Rate for a Website?' Posted by Jay Peyton (last accessed on 23.09.2017: http://www.gorocketfuel.com/the-rocket-blog/whats-the-average-bounce-rate-in-google-analytics/).

[41] Evan S. Porter blog: 'Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Pageviews' "A pageview is a standard unit of measure that equates to one single person loading one single web page. If a person were to sit and load

the same web page 50 times, that would register in Google Analytics as 50 pageviews." Posted by Evan S. Porter on 26.08.2019 (last accessed on 23.09.2017:http://wordsbyevanporter.com/everything-about-pageviews/).

42 Time Spent Online (January - June 2015) - The Internet Advertising Bureau UK (IAB) and the UK Online Measurement Company (UKOM) published a definitive figure on how long people actively spend online each day to bring clarity to the market by removing any confusion around the conflicting sources claiming to measure time online. (last accessed on 23.09.2017: https://www.iabuk.net/research/library/time-spent-online-january-june-2015).

43 The New York Times article: 'Facebook Has 50 Minutes of Your Time Each Day. It Wants More." Written by James B. Stewart and published on 05.05.2016: (last accessed on 23.09.2017: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/business/facebook-bends-the-rules-of-audience-engagement-to-its-advantage.html).

44 GOV.uk Performance: "Performance Dashboards are likely to be used by many people, including government service managers and their teams; journalists; students and researchers; members of the public interested in how public services are doing." Note - we were able to obtain performance analytics for specific webpages by submitting the freedom of information request to the GDS via Cabinet Office. (last accessed on 11.02.2021: https://www.gov.uk/performance).

Chapter **#03**

# RESEARCH DESIGN

## Guiding Principles

The objective of this chapter is to map out the research design that will provide a methodology framework for observing *GOV.uk* as *InfoAttention Marketplace* and constructing our two analytical chapters. In the process, we will organise information into four sections:

1. ***Guiding Principles***: to help us maintain a consistent approach at different stages of our methodology protocols, it is important to define broader principles that will guide our approaches and act as self-corrective mechanism if we move outside the agreed framework.

2. ***Why - When – Who - What***: we are confident that this organisational typology is best suited when rationalising our case study selection, identifying *UK* agenda-shapers, clarifying observed timeframes, and framing *GOV.uk Policy Platform* in juxtaposition with existing data-chambers. In case of 'Who' and 'What' categories, we intend to list all 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments, 47 Policy Areas, 219 Individual Polices, 49 Topical Events, and 238 Worldwide Locations. Each entry will be presented in the context of its data-chamber, identified by its full (official) name, and be assigned a unique reference code. In that way, we can use textual and numerical references interchangeably without disrupting the integrity of its original context.

3. ***Associated Methodology Protocols (How)***: once we identify observed agenda-shapers and data-chamber clusters, it is essential to specify methodology protocols that will inform our data gathering, formatting and analysis. For example, we will be able to explain how we identify and collect info-flows, standardise data, compute the agenda-attention frequency, address data longevity, frame agenda-attention perspectives, and among others establish benchmarks for our analysis.

4. ***Existing Agenda-Attention Approaches:*** and lastly, we aim to summarise some of the existing agenda-attention approaches that could have a direct benefit from our proposed methodology. In the process, we will reflect on *Incrementalism, Agenda-Building, Punctuated Equilibrium, Issue-Attention Cycle, Multiple Policy Streams / 'Garbage Can' model, Focused Adaptation and Four "P"s of the Agenda-Setting* concepts. Foremost, because these approaches tend to analyse the entire [institutional] agenda process, use longitudinal case-study methods, and propose a complete agenda-formation model.

We start by defining key guiding principles that will help us navigate the scope and scale of data sources and contextual typologies that form our research design:

- **Open-meets-Digital**: if we are observing how open government information is manifested in a digital space of a centralised *GOV.uk* portal, we must be able to show that data protocol is 100% aligned with our contextual arguments. Therefore, it is essential that all the data and information we aim to use is 'Open' – accessible to anyone without any restrictions and is presented in a 'Digital' format – allowing us to download, save and reformat relevant information. By practicing what we preach, we are strengthening our argument that centralised government portals are valuable and untapped resource for the future of the agenda research. Such approach will show that opportunities are stronger than obstacles if designing a methodology that corresponds to Open-meets-Digital principles. We will only be dealing with sources that are universally accessible and can be replicated to mirror our modelling. As such, we will not conduct interviews with government officials, quote 'behind-the-scenes' insights that are not already in the public domain or use analytics from paywall protected sources. However, we will make two provisions that still adhere to our primary rule but require additional facilitation. First, involves the *Freedom of Information Request* (FOI) – those will be submitted to a relevant *UK Government* department if we know that information exists but is not accessible on the *GOV.uk* platform. We will only use the information if our request was successful as its aligned with the 'Open' government *modus operandi*. Equally, that means that other researchers or members of public can do the same as those datasets are not classified. Secondly, if we need to obtain a reference information from a paywall protected site, we will only engage with such source if we can obtain a free sample.

- **Single Platform**: we are focusing only on *GOV.uk* as an example of a centralised government portal that we will observe as *InfoAttention Marketplace*. A single case study approach will allow us to showcase all the benefits of engaging with such platforms – from accessing new data-chambers to contextualising government's actionable priorities using officially sanctioned organisational typology. Furthermore, we want to show how (mis)aligned policy and public agendas may be when they interact with the Cabinet-level departments, policy areas, individual policies, topical events, and a worldwide locations within the same digital place, and under same conditions. As such, the *InfoAttention Marketplace* modelling will only use data that is published/displayed and produced on *GOV.uk* platform. We will be operating within clearly defined perimeters that will allow us to gain useful agenda-attention insights.

- **_Informative-Communicative-Interactive_**: as we know from the previous chapter, _GOV.uk_ has many different roles. But, for the purpose of our work, we will only focus on the aspects that are relevant to our _InfoAttention Marketplace_ model. For example, we will not be focusing on its transactional role – providing services to citizens. Instead, we will be focusing on a so called 'Whitehall navigational route' because published content (25 different info-flow types) is curated and organised by the observed departments (agenda-shapers). In addition, we will only engage with 'Departments and Policy' organisational cluster as we focus on _GOV.uk_'s informative and communicative role. We want to know what the selected _UK Government_ agenda-shapers are communicating and publishing across the platform (type/number of info-flows and their timing). Equally, we will be looking at _GOV.uk's_ interactive role as we seek to define public agenda-attention through their interaction with the portal by analysing the web-traffic analytics as part of the _Performance_ section (e.g, pagewiews).

- **_Research Currencies_**: the scope and scale of _GOV.uk_ can be overwhelming, hence why we are focusing on two key variables. On the one hand, we have open 'Information' – how can we contextualise published information to devise a list of actionable government priorities and utilise web analytics (users' digital footprint) to define public attentiveness for different departments, topics, policies, events, and locations. On the other hand, we want to compute the frequency of digital 'Attention' within the _GOV.uk_ – how can we rank actionable government priorities, observe their (re)prioritisation dynamics and compute the agenda-attention frequency.

- **_Standardisation_**: as we will be working with multiple streams: (1) policy vs public agenda; (2) supply vs demand for information; (3) published government info-flows vs users' web analytics; and (4) contextual differences of what it means to observe a department vs a policy area vs individual policy vs topical event vs a worldwide location; it is imperative that we standardise data for cross-cutting comparison. In that way, we have a single formula that governs our ability to rank individual items by their perceived level of agenda-attention regardless of contextual association. We aim to accomplish this task by observing the ranking order in the context of Top 25% - Middle 50% - Bottom 25% configurations. Such uniformed approach will allow us two accomplish two key objectives (1) opportunity to show that we can compare a ranking order between different policy platform clusters; and (2) observe the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agenda-attention whilst using two completely different data signals (info-flows vs web analytics).

## WHY: The Case Study Selection

At the onset of our research, we knew that our focus will be on a single country and a single centralised government portal. We also knew that our methodology would need to accommodate our language constraints and the existing familiarity with socio-political-economic systems that are associated with *Anglosphere* countries. Initially, that meant that we could choose between the *Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom* or the *United States*. Even though they share linguistic and governance traits, these countries were not operating at the same 'digital-by-default' level. As usual, the *US* was ahead of the tribe in terms of its transition to a centralised government portal, but the sheer scope and scale of the platform and the *US Government* in general, can be overwhelming, especially when the objective is to pilot test the *InfoAttention Marketplace* model. As such, we have decided that a mid-range country is much more suitable for such experimentation. Ultimately, the decision was made on our behalf with the launch of *GOV.uk* portal in 2012, as it was most advanced centralised platform in comparison to its *Australian, Canadian* and *New Zealand* counterparts.

Whilst the scope and scale of the centralised *UK Government* portal is well aligned with our research objectives, it is important to highlight other attributes that makes the *United Kingdom* a suitable single-country/portal case study:

- As a mid-size country, the *UK* is a good testing ground for the agenda research as it provides sufficient flow of information without overwhelming the research protocols with its complexity;

- Historically, the *UK* was perceived as a 'policy-transfer' bridge between the *USA* and the *Australasia* and the *European* countries; especially when it comes to open and digital government. As such, it was not surprising that the *UK Government* would follow the *US* lead and expand into a centralised government platform earlier than its counterparts. Which makes the *GOV.uk* a reliable benchmark for future research that may focus on the diffusion of innovation across the world. Mapping out when and how centralised government portals have been adopted and adapted by different countries;

- Whilst the previous assertion was focusing on the *UK*'s 'digital-by-default' credentials, it is also important to note its commitment towards the *Open Government*[45] concept. As we argued previously, the success of a centralised government portal does not rest solely on its digital and user interface attributes – its true potential is assessed by the

availability and accessibility of information and how government uses the platform to amplify its strategic communication. Although, it is highly unlikely that we can identify a government that is 100% committed to full transparency or is willing to completely switch to digital *modus operandi*; we are confident that the *GOV.uk* possess enough Open-meets-Digital symbiosis to validate our arguments;

- The *UK* policy arena has a diverse domestic focus and expansive global agenda. Which allows us to assess how the agenda-attention-market-share is distributed between domestic and international priorities. Thanks to the *FCO*'s extensive diplomatic network and geopolitical interests, we can literally assess the level of the *UK* agenda-attention for every country and overseas territory in the world. In return, we can produce insights that other researchers can use to test whether a geographic proximity of a country to the *UK* shores, is correlated with the frequency of the agenda-attention it receives within the observed timeframe;

- Strong emphasis on government strategic communication and use of digital and social tools to amplify the official message makes the *UK Government* attractive for the agenda research. Especially, if the communicative agenda-attention perspective is integral part of the *GOV.uk* dynamics. We know that the portal designates six different info-flow formats to its *Announcements* collection, from new stories, to press releases, statements, and speeches. As such, we hope to use our modelling to determine if the *UK Government* is in business of coordinating policy or communicating its agenda; *and*

- Last, but not least, the launch of the *GOV.uk* portal also coincides with one of the pivotal milestones in the *UK* politics. The general election in 2010 did not materialised a majority government for the *Conservative Party* which opened the door for the first coalition[46] government with the *Liberal Democrats* since the *Churchill* caretaker ministry in 1945. As such, the 2010-2015 period presents a unique opportunity to assess the agenda-attention dynamics in an unconventional setting for the *UK* politics that is usually governed by a single-party majority government. Consequently, our findings and insights may help future researchers examine whether a *Coalition*-mandated policymaking exhibits distinctly different features, priorities, and the frequency of the agenda-attention on issues that withstand the test of time and political ideologies.

## WHEN: Macro-Meso-Micro Timeframes

Even though the *GOV.uk* was officially launched in February 2012, the *GDS* has decided to integrate all the info-flows dating back to 10 May 2010 when the *Coalition Government* officially started its mandate. As such, we have decided to accept that date as the starting point for our observed timeframe. But we still had to decided when do we stop our data collection – what would be a logical timeframe? At first, we were collecting and analysing data in real-time. On the one hand, it was an opportunity to test the *Nowcasting* concept in real-time. On the other hand, constantly evolving changes to portal's user interface and knowledge management protocols was deemed to be too disruptive. So, we have decided to focus on a stable historical period for the analysis.

At first, we wanted to focus on the full *Coalition Government* mandate, from May 2010 to May 2015, as that will provide us with a full picture of how the agenda-attention dynamics evolve in the context of a single mandate. But, at the end we have opted for a 5+1 option by extending our timeframe to 10 May 2016. In that way, we can showcase one full (Coalition) mandate and one full calendar year of the single-party governing – the *Conservative Party* won a majority government in 2015 general elections. We believe that such unique combination of two disparate mandates can provide us with valuable insights as to how the agenda-attention may change in response to the election cycle and change of government and policy mandates.

However, our datasets for policy and public agenda-attention were not necessarily aligned with our selected timeframe. Whilst we had all the data to define actionable government priorities and compute the frequency of the policy agenda-attention (info-flows), that was not the case for our demand side of the equation (pageviews). As we are measuring public agenda-attention using the *GOV.uk* web analytics, it became clear that such data was not captured in an organised and systematic manner by the *GDS* until March 2014. Therefore, we had to accept that certain observations won't be applicable to both agendas at every stage of our analysis. To address this issue and minimise potential constraints, we have divided the timeline into three contextual segments – to be applied interchangeably in our analytical chapters:

1. **MACRO timeframe**: 10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016 (our aggregated / big picture) – incorporating five years of the *Coalition Government* and the first year of the *Conservative Party* governing majority.

2. **MESO timeframe**: 1 March 2014 – 10 May 2016 (an alignment when we have data for policy and public agenda-attention – allowing us to make comparable observations)

3. **MICRO timeframe**: 1 January – 31 December 2015 (the only full calendar year when we have data for policy and public agenda-attention).

## GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace Attributes

We are contextualising the *GOV.uk* as *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* – a space where an open *Supply* of digitised government info-flows meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open information. This approach will allow us to focus on the 'actionable' agenda issues/events, which means that we only observe issues that have already found their way onto the official agenda-continuum. As stated previously, we are not interested in how they got selected; we are keen to understand how the frequency of agenda-attention (re)prioritises actionable government priorities. To accomplish that mission, we need to map out the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace*. First, we need to explain which *GOV.uk* information and organisational typology will formulate our research design. Once we have clearly defined 'data-chambers', we can present elements responsible for the *InfoAttention Marketplace* dynamics. As we seek to identify 'data-chambers', our primary focus will be on the '*Communicative*' aspect of *GOV.uk* operations. However, that does not mean that we will analyse every segment in this constellation. For this research, we have reconstituted the *GOV.uk* matrix to show precisely which information domains and organisational elements will be used to contextualise the '*InfoAttention Marketplace'* (see figure 3-1):

1. ***Organisation – Departments:*** indicates which central government departments, agencies, and public bodies reside within *GOV.uk*. Even though the platform was a host to 357 public sector entities, we will only focus on the key '*Agenda-Shapers*' – *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* as they represent the *UK Government's* apex.

2. ***Organisation – Performance:*** it captures users' behavioural characteristics and digital footprint across *GOV.uk* – selected web analytics are open to the public, and information is used to improve website performance. We will focus on 'pageviews' as those analytics can give us the most accurate reflection of the public agenda-attention.

3. ***Policymaking:*** thanks to *GOV.uk* organisational typology, interface design and info-flow coding protocol, we have a unique opportunity to visualise the *UK Policy Platform* through the lens of its four key clusters: 47 *Policy Areas*, 219 *Individual Policies*, 49 *Topical Events* and 237 *Worldwide Locations*.

4. ***Info-Flows***: a two-tier categorisation is used to organise all the published information on the *GOV.uk* platform. There are 25 different types of info-flows, and they are conceptually associated with one of the three *Collections*: *Publications* (n18), *Announcements* (n6) and *Statistics* (n1). They are also sub-categorised by their content's type/format – from *Policy papers* to *FOI releases, Statistics* or *News stories*.

**GOV.uk Home Page**

SEARCH GOV.uk
[Allows the User to search the entire site]

Popular on GOV.uk
[Top 5 most popular searches]

**SERVICES and INFORMATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Register to vote* | Crime, justice and the law | Housing and local services |
| Benefits | Disabled people | Money and tax |
| Births, deaths, marriages and care | Driving and transport | Passports, travel and living abroad |
| Business and self-employed | Education and learning | Visas and immigration |
| Childcare and parenting | Employing people | Working, jobs and pensions |
| Citizenship and living in the UK | Environment and countryside | |

*'Register to vote' is only a temporary topic-highlight on the home page due to incoming 'Brexit referendum'

**DEPARTMENTS and POLICY**

| DEPARTMENTS | Policies | PERFORMANCE |
|---|---|---|
| 24 Ministerial Departments | Announcements | how government services are performing and how many users access different departments and transactional services |
| 331 Agencies & Public bodies | Publications | |
| | Statistics | |
| How government works | Consultations | |
| Get involved | Worldwide | |

| Window #1 | Window #2 | Window #3 |
|---|---|---|
| 'EU Referendum' | 'Driving licence counterpart' | 'Right to Rent' |

[High-Visibility-Issues | Promotional windows | Content changes on regular basis]

**MORE on GOV.uk**

Most active
Listing 10 topical-areas with highest level of user interaction across the site

Promotional-Issue box
On this occasion, it was a call to 'Register to vote' for the Brexit referendum

**FOOTER MENU**

| | |
|---|---|
| Services and information: 16 Topical quick-links | Departments and policy: 6 Topical quick-links |
| Reference information: 6 categories | |

**ORGANISATION**

DEPARTMENTS (n357)

| 2 | 24 | 331 |
|---|---|---|
| Office of the PM and DPM | Ministerial Departments | Agencies & Public Bodies |

PERFORMANCE

GOV.uk dashboard for Ministerial departments *(who visits/clicks what, how and when)*

HOW GOVERNMNET WORKS

| Who runs government | How government is run | History of government |
|---|---|---|

GET INVOLVED

| Engage with government | Take part |
|---|---|
| Respond to consultations | Volunteer; National Citizen Service; Help run a charity; Set up a new school; Protect a local building; Become a councillor and etc… |
| Start a petition | |
| Follow a blog or social media channel | |

**POLICYMAKING**

POLICIES

| n47 | n219 | n49 |
|---|---|---|
| Policy Areas | Individual Policies | Topical Events |

WORLDWIDE

| n238 |
|---|
| Locations |

**INFO-FLOWS**

| Publications (n18) | Statistics (n1) | Announcements (n6) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consultations | Statistics | Fatality notices | | |
| All consultations: | | Government responses | | |
| Open consultations | | News stories | | |
| Closed consultations | | Press releases | | |
| Corporate | | Speeches | | |
| Corporate reports | | Statements | | |
| FOI releases | | | | |
| Transparency data | | | | |
| Policy & Guidance | | | | |
| Correspondence | Impact Assessments | Policy papers | | |
| Guidance | Independent reports | | | |
| Other | | | | |
| Decisions | Forms | | | |
| International treaties | Maps | | | |
| Notices | Promotional material | | | |
| Regulations | | | | |
| Research | | | | |
| Research & analysis | | | | |

Our research will concentrate on the **'Departments and Policy'** domain which encompasses five contextual areas: **Departments, Policy Areas, Policies, Topical Events and Locations**; and three info-flow collections: **Publications** (including consultations), **Statistics** and the **Announcements:**

## Agenda-Shapers and UK Policy Platform (Actionable Government Priorities)

| 24+2 Departments | 47 Policy Areas | 219 Policies | 49 Topical Events | 238 Locations |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Figure 3-1:** Contextualising 'UK Policy Platform' on GOV.uk [10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016]. Based on 09.05.2016 content and organisational framework. Red-frames indicate the segments that will be observed in our study.
Source: www.GOV.uk

*InfoAttention Marketplace* is not just a term that we use to describe the *GOV.uk* dynamics*;* we envision this construct as a combination of several interconnected elements and processes that can be observed independently from each other and collectively when we need to form the 'big picture'. Therefore, our proposed methodology allows the researchers to focus on different agenda-shapers and policy domains when establishing the agenda-attention frequency, ranking priority of actionable government priorities and the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas. Before we examine their attributes and applicability in greater detail (see chapters #05 and #06), we will provide a brief overview of the key elements and concepts in our WHO (*UK* Agenda-Shapers), WHAT (*UK* Policy Platform) and HOW (Agenda-Attention frequency, market-share, perspectives and the continuum) sections.

| POLICY AGENDA-ATTENTION | PUBLIC AGENDA-ATTENTION |
|---|---|
| Governing through Nodality: <br> • **UK Agenda Shapers: Effectors** | Governing through Nodality: <br> • **UK Agenda Shapers: Detectors** |
| InfoAttention Activity: <br> • **Supply-output of GOV.uk Info-Flows** | InfoAttention Activity: <br> • **Demand-input for GOV.uk Info-Flows** |
| Agenda-Attention Lens: <br> • **Institutional agenda preferences** *(what government wants you to know)* | Agenda-Attention Lens: <br> • **Public attentiveness to policy issues** *(what people want to think about)* |
| Open-meets-Digital context: <br> • **GOV.uk [Policy Platform]** | Open-meets-Digital context: <br> • **GOV.uk [Performance Platform]** |
| Data-Chambers: <br> • **24+2 Cabinet-level departments** <br> • **47 Policy Areas** <br> • **219 Individual Policies** <br> • **49 Topical Events** <br> • **238 Worldwide Locations** | Data-Chambers: <br> • **GOV.uk Web Analytics** *(user's digital footprint across the platform)* |
| Research currency: <br> • **25 types of government info-flows that are published on GOV.uk and organised into three collections:** <br> (1) Publications (n18) <br> (2) Statistics (n1) <br> (3) Announcements (n6) | Research currency: <br> • **GOV.uk web analytics from the Performance Dashboard and FOI Requests:** <br> (1) Pageviews <br> (2) Number of Unique Visitors |
| Agenda Perspectives: <br> • **Aggregated** *(combined info-flows)* <br> • **Coordinative** *(Publication info-flows)* <br> • **Communicative** *(Announcement info-flows)* | Agenda Perspectives: <br> • **Aggregated** *(combined pageviews)* |

**Figure 3-2:** Research Design Methodology Matrix II: Policy vs Public Agenda-Attention. Constructed by M Norderland (2020).

## WHO: UK Agenda-Shapers [*Effectors & Detectors*]

Observing government as a *'tool kit'* is very much influenced by Hood and Margetts' '*The Tools of Government in the Digital Age'* (2007; p.3) framework and their respective categorisation protocols. By understanding how this process works and which tools the government chooses to use, we can better understand what they can do in any given case and time (Hood and Margetts, 2007; p.12). We consider their concept of *'Nodality'* to be relevant for our research design as it gives the government ability to "traffic in information based on 'figureheadedness' or for having the whole picture" (Simon et al., 1950; p.191). Correspondingly, '*Nodality'* denotes the property of being in the middle of information or social network (Hood and Margetts, 2007; p.5/6) and is central to our thinking. It strategically places the government within the *InfoAttention Marketplace* by allowing them to supply the info-flows and analyse the demand for information across *GOV.uk* (users' digital footprint).

In that context, '*Nodality'* enables the government to mainstream its actionable government priorities and detect the 'public pulse' - what people want to think about when surfing a government platform. As such, '*Nodality'* may "cause the government to receive information in the same way as it may give the government a reason to be listened to" (Hood and Margetts, 2007; p.8). In the process, we will make a distinction between the ability to:

- **'effect'** (*Effectors* – defined as all the instruments that the government can use to try to make an impact on the world outside); *and*

- **'detect'** (*Detectors* – defined as all the instruments that the government uses for taking in information).

In order to bring these two guiding principles in line with the specific nature of our research, one will go one step further by aligning:

- *Effectors* with the supply of government's information on the *GOV.uk* platform. When the government decides to publish an info-flow on its platform, it signals that its paying attention to that topic, policy, event or location. As such, we will identify those publishers as our *Policy Agenda-Shapers* (see figure 3-3 for the complete list). Even though *GOV.uk* hosts 357 public sector entities; not all institutions have migrated to the platform. There are different reasons[47], some due to their mandate, some because of their content and some for logistics reasons[48]. We intend to focus on *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*, as they represent the apex of the *UK Government*, which means that we will be analysing the agenda-attention frequency for 22 *Departments* and the *Office of the Prime Minister* and the *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister* (DPM).

## 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments [UK Government]

**CODED LIST** *(Departments are listed in GOV.uk sanctioned order of appearance)*

| Reference code | Full name of the Department |
|---|---|
| **00A-PM** | **Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street** |
| **00B-DPM** | **Deputy Prime Minister's Office\*** |
| **01-AGO** | **Attorney General's Office** |
| **02-CO** | **Cabinet Office** |
| **03-DBIS** | **Department for Business, Innovation & Skills** |
| **04-DCLG** | **Department for Communities and Local Government** |
| **05-DCMS** | **Department for Culture, Media & Sport** |
| **06-DfE** | **Department for Education** |
| **07-DEFRA** | **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs** |
| **08-DFID** | **Department for International Development** |
| **09-DfT** | **Department for Transport** |
| **10-DWP** | **Department for Work and Pensions** |
| **11-DECC** | **Department of Energy & Climate Change** |
| **12-DH** | **Department of Health** |
| **13-FCO** | **Foreign & Commonwealth Office** |
| **14-HMT** | **HM Treasury** |
| **15-HO** | **Home Office** |
| **16-MoD** | **Ministry of Defence** |
| **17-MoJ** | **Ministry of Justice** |
| **18-NIO** | **Northern Ireland Office** |
| **19-OAG** | **Office of the Advocate General for Scotland** |
| **20-OLHC** | **Office of the Leader of the House of Commons** |
| **21-OLHL** | **Office of the Leader of the House of Lords** |
| **22-SO** | **Scotland Office** |
| **23-UKEF** | **UK Export Finance** |
| **24-WO** | **Wales Office** |

**Legend:**
- We are using the official 'Abbreviated coding' from GOV.uk and applying our 'Numerical' coding for each department.
- Information in this table was captured on 27.12.2015.
- \*The office of the 'Deputy Prime Minister' (occupied by the Rt Hon Nick Clegg, MP) was only active during the 'Coalition government' term (May 2010 – May 2015). It ceased to exist after the 2015 election when the Conservative party managed to secure a narrow majority in the parliament and conclude the 'Coalition' agreement.

**Figure 3-3:** Policy Agenda-Shapers - coded list of 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments (the apex of the UK Government). Reflective of 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016 research timeframe. Source: www.gov.uk/government/organisations

If we observe 357 departments, agencies, and other public bodies residing on *GOV.uk*, both as the 'publishers' of government information and the 'recipients' of public attention, it is important to establish how supply/input indicators are redistributed across these entities. In the following chapter, we will establish 'market-share' distribution between *24+2 Ministerial departments* and the remaining 331 entities as a baseline for our subsequent analysis. If we consider that *24+2 Cabinet-level* departments form the apex of the *UK Government*, we also expect them to command a large agenda-attention-market-share. However, we should keep an open mind regarding the demand for information, as public attention levels may not necessarily be aligned with the frequency of the institutional agenda.

- ***Detectors*** process captures the level of public attentiveness - what people want to think about as they proactively seek information across the *GOV.uk*. As users navigate the platform, their behavioural characteristics are recorded by the *GDS* and used to assess the webpage performance. In our case, the *Public Agenda-Shapers* will be presented as an anonymised cluster of *GOV.uk* visitors who leave behind a 'pageviews' digital trace – what they click/view can help us calculate their [perceived] agenda-attention.

## WHAT: GOV.uk Policy Platform
### Policy Areas, Individual Policies, Topical Events and Worldwide Locations

The *GOV.uk* knowledge management and digital interface provide us with a unique insight into how the government organises its policymaking process. Firstly, we can identify actionable government priorities by focusing on four official clusters: *Policy Areas – Individual Policies – Topical Events – Worldwide Locations*. Secondly, info-flow association with *Publications – Statistics – Announcements* allow us to distinguish between coordinative and communicative agenda-attention. Finally, the official *GOV.uk* methodology allows us to contextualise the *UK Policy Platform* and generate the official *Agenda List*:

**47 Policy Areas:** provide a contextual umbrella for different policies by grouping them around shared topics such as *Economy, Immigration* or *Defence*. On the one hand, such categorisation allows us to see how the government defines broader policy topics and links different policies. On the other hand, it allows us to observe how the agenda-attention is designated to broader policy areas and not just individual policies. Overall, this cluster can provide macro policy signals when assessing priorities (see figure 3-4).

**219 Individual Policies:** allow us to observe the agenda-attention frequency for each policy independently from *Policy Areas*. In the process, we are only focusing on active policies during our research timeframe, including those archived after May 2015 *National Election.* In addition to identifying which info-flows are linked to individual policies, the *GOV.uk* organisational typology allows us to identify their associations with departments, policy areas and locations (see figure 3-5).

**49 Topical Events:** were introduced as a novel policy categorisation to amplify time-limited events of significant policy and/or a *PR* value to the *UK Government*. In contrast to individual policies, these events tend to have a pre-determined life-cycle, and they are primarily associated with the budget, anniversaries, summits/conferences, and responses to international events. As not every issue is awarded such high-visibility status, *Topical Events* represent a reactive and strategic form of agenda-attention (see figure 3-6).

**238 Worldwide Locations:** are not defined by the *UK Government* – it reflects the complex world affairs. In addition to sovereign nations, *French/Dutch/USA* overseas territories, it also lists the *British Overseas Territories* and the *UK* membership to a high-profile international organisation (e.g., *NATO, UN*). Nevertheless, we still consider them to be actionable government priorities because institutional agenda-attention frequency will determine its priority status (see figure 3-7).

## GOV.uk: 47 Policy Areas

**CODED LIST** *(Policy Areas are listed in GOV.uk sanctioned order of appearance)*

| Code | Policy Area | Code | Policy Area |
|------|-------------|------|-------------|
| PA#01 | Arts and culture | PA#25 | Local government |
| PA#02 | Borders and immigration | PA#26 | Media and communications |
| PA#03 | Business and enterprise | PA#27 | National Health Service |
| PA#04 | Children and young people | PA#28 | National security |
| PA#05 | Climate change | PA#29 | Northern Ireland |
| PA#06 | Community and society | PA#30 | Pensions and ageing society |
| PA#07 | Consumer rights and issues | PA#31 | Planning and building |
| PA#08 | Crime and policing | PA#32 | Public health |
| PA#09 | Defence and armed forces | PA#33 | Public safety and emergencies |
| PA#10 | Employment | PA#34 | Regulation reform |
| PA#11 | Energy | PA#35 | Rural and countryside |
| PA#12 | Environment | PA#36 | Schools |
| PA#13 | Equality, rights and citizenship | PA#37 | Science and innovation |
| PA#14 | Europe | PA#38 | Scotland |
| PA#15 | Financial services | PA#39 | Social care |
| PA#16 | Food and farming | PA#40 | Sports and leisure |
| PA#17 | Foreign affairs | PA#41 | Tax and revenue |
| PA#18 | Further education and skills | PA#42 | Trade and investment |
| PA#19 | Government efficiency, transparency and accountability | PA#43 | Transport |
| PA#20 | Government spending | PA#44 | UK economy |
| PA#21 | Higher education | PA#45 | Wales |
| PA#22 | Housing | PA#46 | Welfare |
| PA#23 | International aid and development | PA#47 | Wildlife and animal welfare |
| PA#24 | Law and the justice system | | |

**Note:**
- Listed policy areas are identified by (1) our reference code and (2) the official title.

**Figure 3-4:** 47 Policy Areas - reflective of 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016 research timeframe.
Source: www.gov.uk/government/topics (14.03.2015).

# GOV.uk: 219 Individual Policies

**CODED LIST** *(Policies are listed in GOV.uk sanctioned order of appearance)*

| Code | Individual Policy title | Code | Individual Policy title |
|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|
| P#01 | 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy | P#42 | Climate change impact in developing countries |
| P#02 | Academies and free schools | P#43 | Climate change international action |
| P#03 | Financial services | P#44 | Common Agricultural Policy reform |
| P#04 | Higher education | P#45 | Communications and telecoms |
| P#05 | Rural and countryside | P#46 | Community integration |
| P#06 | Accessible transport | P#47 | Company law reform |
| P#07 | Administrative justice reform | P#48 | Compassionate care in the NHS |
| P#08 | Afghanistan | P#49 | Competition law |
| P#09 | Alcohol sales and misuse | P#50 | Conflict in fragile states |
| P#10 | Animal and plant health | P#51 | Conservation of historic buildings and monuments |
| P#11 | Animal research and testing | P#52 | Constitutional reform |
| P#12 | Animal welfare | P#53 | Consumer credit market |
| P#13 | Armed forces and Ministry of Defence reform | P#54 | Consumer protection |
| P#14 | Armed Forces Covenant | P#55 | Corporate governance |
| P#15 | Armed forces support for activities in the UK | P#56 | Council Tax reform |
| P#16 | Arts and culture | P#57 | Counter-terrorism |
| P#17 | Automatic enrolment in workplace pensions | P#58 | Crime prevention |
| P#18 | Aviation and airports | P#59 | Criminal justice reform |
| P#19 | Bank regulation | P#60 | Cyber security |
| P#20 | Biodiversity and ecosystems | P#61 | Deficit reduction |
| P#21 | Bovine tuberculosis (bovine TB) | P#62 | Dementia |
| P#22 | British nationals overseas | P#63 | Drug misuse and dependency |
| P#23 | Broadband investment | P#64 | Economic development in coastal and seaside areas |
| P#24 | Building regulation | P#65 | Economic growth in developing countries |
| P#25 | Business and the environment | P#66 | Economic growth in rural areas |
| P#26 | Business enterprise | P#67 | Economic growth in Wales |
| P#27 | Business regulation | P#68 | Education in developing countries |
| P#28 | Business tax reform | P#69 | Education of disadvantaged children |
| P#29 | Cancer research and treatment | P#70 | Elite sports performance |
| P#30 | Carers' health | P#71 | Emergency planning |
| P#31 | Central government efficiency | P#72 | Employment |
| P#32 | Child maintenance reform | P#73 | End of life care |
| P#33 | Childcare and early education | P#74 | Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis |
| P#34 | Children outside mainstream education (alternative provision) | P#75 | Energy demand reduction in industry, business and the public sector |
| P#35 | Children's health | P#76 | Energy efficiency in buildings |
| P#36 | Children's social workers | P#77 | Energy industry and infrastructure licensing and regulation |
| P#37 | Choice in health and social care | P#78 | Environmental quality |
| P#38 | City Deals and Growth Deals | P#79 | Equality |
| P#39 | Civil justice reform | P#80 | European funds |
| P#40 | Civil service reform | P#81 | European single market |
| P#41 | Climate change adaptation | P#82 | Export controls |

| Code | Individual Policy title |
|------|------------------------|
| P#83 | Exports and inward investment |
| P#84 | Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination |
| P#85 | Family justice system |
| P#86 | Farming industry regulation |
| P#87 | Financial services regulation |
| P#88 | Fire prevention and rescue |
| P#89 | Flooding and coastal change |
| P#90 | Food and farming industry |
| P#91 | Forests and woodland |
| P#92 | Free trade |
| P#93 | Freight |
| P#94 | Freshwater fisheries |
| P#95 | Further education and training |
| P#96 | Gambling regulation |
| P#97 | Governance in developing countries |
| P#98 | Government as a Platform |
| P#99 | Government buying |
| P#100 | Government spending |
| P#101 | Government transparency and accountability |
| P#102 | Greenhouse gas emissions |
| P#103 | Harmful drinking |
| P#104 | Health and safety reform |
| P#105 | Health and social care integration |
| P#106 | Health emergency planning |
| P#107 | Health in developing countries |
| P#108 | High streets and town centres |
| P#109 | Higher education participation |
| P#110 | Homebuying |
| P#111 | House building |
| P#112 | Household energy |
| P#113 | Housing for older and vulnerable people |
| P#114 | HS2: high speed rail |
| P#115 | Human rights internationally |
| P#116 | Humanitarian emergencies |
| P#117 | Hunger and malnutrition in developing countries |
| P#118 | Immigration and borders |
| P#119 | Industrial strategy |
| P#120 | International defence commitments |
| P#121 | Iran's nuclear programme |
| P#122 | Justice system transparency |
| P#123 | Knife, gun and gang crime |
| P#124 | Labour market reform |
| P#125 | Legal aid reform |
| P#126 | Library services |
| P#127 | Local council transparency and accountability |

| Code | Individual Policy title |
|------|------------------------|
| P#128 | Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Enterprise Zones |
| P#129 | Local government spending |
| P#130 | Local transport |
| P#131 | Localism |
| P#132 | Long term health conditions |
| P#133 | Looked-after children and adoption |
| P#134 | Low carbon technologies |
| P#135 | Major project management |
| P#136 | Management of the European Regional Development Fund |
| P#137 | Marine environment |
| P#138 | Marine fisheries |
| P#139 | Maritime sector |
| P#140 | Media and creative industries |
| P#141 | Mental health service reform |
| P#142 | Museums and galleries |
| P#143 | National events and ceremonies |
| P#144 | National Lottery funding |
| P#145 | NHS efficiency |
| P#146 | Northern Ireland community relations |
| P#147 | Northern Ireland economy |
| P#148 | Northern Ireland political stability |
| P#149 | Northern Ireland security |
| P#150 | Nuclear disarmament |
| P#151 | Obesity and healthy eating |
| P#152 | Older people |
| P#153 | Overseas aid effectiveness |
| P#154 | Overseas aid transparency |
| P#155 | Patient safety |
| P#156 | Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa |
| P#157 | Personal tax reform |
| P#158 | Piracy off the coast of Somalia |
| P#159 | Planning reform |
| P#160 | Planning system |
| P#161 | Policing |
| P#162 | Postal service reform |
| P#163 | Poverty and social justice |
| P#164 | Public understanding of science and engineering |
| P#165 | Radioactive and nuclear substances and waste |
| P#166 | Rail network |
| P#167 | Regional Growth Fund |
| P#168 | Rented housing sector |
| P#169 | Reoffending and rehabilitation |
| P#170 | Research and development |
| P#171 | Research and innovation in health and social care |
| P#172 | Road network and traffic |

| Code | Individual Policy title | Code | Individual Policy title |
|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|
| P#173 | Road safety | P#197 | Teaching and school leadership |
| P#174 | Rural economy and community | P#198 | The Commonwealth |
| P#175 | School and college accountability | P#199 | Tourism |
| P#176 | School and college funding | P#200 | Transport emissions |
| P#177 | School and college qualifications and curriculum | P#201 | Transport security |
| P#178 | School behaviour and attendance | P#202 | UK economic growth |
| P#179 | School building and maintenance | P#203 | UK energy security |
| P#180 | Scottish constitution | P#204 | UK nuclear deterrent |
| P#181 | Scottish devolution | P#205 | UK Overseas Territories |
| P#182 | Sentencing reform | P#206 | UK prosperity and security: Asia, Latin America and Africa |
| P#183 | Sexual violence in conflict | P#207 | Victims of crime |
| P#184 | Smoking | P#208 | Violence against women and girls |
| P#185 | Social action | P#209 | Waste and recycling |
| P#186 | Social enterprise | P#210 | Water and sanitation in developing countries |
| P#187 | Social investment | P#211 | Water and sewerage services |
| P#188 | Social mobility | P#212 | Water industry |
| P#189 | Special educational needs and disability (SEND) | P#213 | Water quality |
| P#190 | Sports participation | P#214 | Weapons proliferation |
| P#191 | Stability in the Western Balkans | P#215 | Welfare reform |
| P#192 | State Pension age | P#216 | Welsh devolution |
| P#193 | State Pension simplification | P#217 | Women and girls in developing countries |
| P#194 | Support for families | P#218 | Young offenders |
| P#195 | Sustainable development | P#219 | Young people |
| P#196 | Tax evasion and avoidance | | |

**Note:**
- Listed policies are identified by (1) our reference code and (2) the official title.

**Figure 3-5:** 219 Individual Policies - reflective of 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016 research timeframe.
Source: www.gov.uk/government/policies/

# GOV.uk: 49 Topical Events

**CODED LIST** *(Topical Events are listed in GOV.uk sanctioned order of appearance)*

| Code | Topical Event title | Code | Topical Event title |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| TE#01 | UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit) | TE#26 | Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients |
| TE#02 | Open Government Partnership Summit 2013 | TE#27 | Daesh: UK government response |
| TE#03 | Friends of Yemen, 7 March 2013 | TE#28 | Ebola virus: UK government response |
| TE#04 | First World War Centenary | TE#29 | Autumn Statement 2014 |
| TE#05 | Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council | TE#30 | National Apprenticeship Awards 2015 |
| TE#06 | Autumn Statement 2012 | TE#31 | National Apprenticeship Week 2015 |
| TE#07 | Somalia Conference 2013 | TE#32 | VE Day 70th anniversary |
| TE#08 | D5 London 2014: leading digital governments | TE#33 | Election 2015 |
| TE#09 | UK Presidency of G7 2013 | TE#34 | Nepal earthquake April 2015 |
| TE#10 | Budget 2013 | TE#35 | Summer Budget 2015 |
| TE#11 | Queen's Speech 2013 | TE#36 | Queen's Speech 2015 |
| TE#12 | Spending Round 2013 | TE#37 | Bastion Memorial Dedication |
| TE#13 | Scottish independence referendum | TE#38 | VJ Day 70th anniversary |
| TE#14 | Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict | TE#39 | Battle of the Somme Centenary |
| TE#15 | London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014 | TE#40 | Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 |
| TE#16 | Autumn Statement 2013 | TE#41 | Youth Summit 2015 |
| TE#17 | NATO Summit Wales 2014 | TE#42 | United Nations General Assembly 2015 |
| TE#18 | London Conference on Afghanistan 2014 | TE#43 | Farming |
| TE#19 | Budget 2014 | TE#44 | UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017 |
| TE#20 | March Budget 2015 | TE#45 | EU referendum |
| TE#21 | Budget 2016 | TE#46 | Winter flooding 2015 to 2016: community support |
| TE#22 | UK Pavilion at Milan Expo 2015 | TE#47 | National Apprenticeship Awards 2016 |
| TE#23 | D-Day 70 | TE#48 | National Apprenticeship Week 2016 |
| TE#24 | Girl Summit 2014 | TE#49 | Supporting Syria Conference 2016 |
| TE#25 | Queen's Speech 2014 | | |

Listed topical events are identified by (1) our reference code and (2) the official title.

**Figure 3-6:** 49 Topical Events - reflective of 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016 research timeframe.
Source: gov.uk/government/topical-events

# GOV.uk: 238 Worldwide Locations

**CODED LIST** *(Locations are listed in GOV.uk sanctioned order of appearance)*

| Code | Location | Code | Location |
|------|----------|------|----------|
| WL#01 | Afghanistan | WL#48 | Colombia |
| WL#02 | Albania | WL#49 | Comoros |
| WL#03 | Algeria | WL#50 | Congo |
| WL#04 | American Samoa** | WL#51 | Costa Rica |
| WL#05 | Andorra | WL#52 | Cote d'Ivoire |
| WL#06 | Angola | WL#53 | Croatia |
| WL#07 | Anguilla* | WL#54 | Cuba |
| WL#08 | Antigua and Barbuda | WL#55 | Curaçao (Willemstad)** |
| WL#09 | Argentina | WL#56 | Cyprus |
| WL#10 | Armenia | WL#57 | Czech Republic |
| WL#11 | Aruba** | WL#58 | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| WL#12 | Australia | WL#59 | Denmark |
| WL#13 | Austria | WL#60 | Djibouti |
| WL#14 | Azerbaijan | WL#61 | Dominica |
| WL#15 | Bahamas | WL#62 | Dominican Republic |
| WL#16 | Bahrain | WL#63 | Ecuador |
| WL#17 | Bangladesh | WL#64 | Egypt |
| WL#18 | Barbados | WL#65 | El Salvador |
| WL#19 | Belarus | WL#66 | Equatorial Guinea |
| WL#20 | Belgium | WL#67 | Eritrea |
| WL#21 | Belize | WL#68 | Estonia |
| WL#22 | Benin | WL#69 | Ethiopia |
| WL#23 | Bermuda* | WL#70 | Falkland Islands* |
| WL#24 | Bhutan | WL#71 | Fiji |
| WL#25 | Bolivia | WL#72 | Finland |
| WL#26 | Bonaire/St Eustatius/Saba** | WL#73 | France |
| WL#27 | Bosnia and Herzegovina | WL#74 | French Guiana** |
| WL#28 | Botswana | WL#75 | French Polynesia** |
| WL#29 | Brazil | WL#76 | Gabon |
| WL#30 | British Antarctic Territory* | WL#77 | Gambia |
| WL#31 | British Indian Ocean Territory* | WL#78 | Georgia |
| WL#32 | British Overseas Territories* | WL#79 | Germany |
| WL#33 | British Virgin Islands* | WL#80 | Ghana |
| WL#34 | Brunei | WL#81 | Gibraltar* |
| WL#35 | Bulgaria | WL#82 | Greece |
| WL#36 | Burkina Faso | WL#83 | Grenada |
| WL#37 | Burma | WL#84 | Guadeloupe** |
| WL#38 | Burundi | WL#85 | Guatemala |
| WL#39 | Cambodia | WL#86 | Guinea |
| WL#40 | Cameroon | WL#87 | Guinea-Bissau |
| WL#41 | Canada | WL#88 | Guyana |
| WL#42 | Cape Verde | WL#89 | Haiti |
| WL#43 | Cayman Islands* | WL#90 | Holly See*** |
| WL#44 | Central African Republic | WL#91 | Honduras |
| WL#45 | Chad | WL#92 | Hong Kong*** |
| WL#46 | Chile | WL#93 | Hungary |
| WL#47 | China | WL#94 | Iceland |

| Code | Location | | Code | Location |
|------|----------|---|------|----------|
| WL#95 | India | | WL#142 | Namibia |
| WL#96 | Indonesia | | WL#143 | Nauru |
| WL#97 | Iran | | WL#144 | Nepal |
| WL#98 | Iraq | | WL#145 | Netherlands |
| WL#99 | Ireland | | WL#146 | New Caledonia** |
| WL#100 | Israel | | WL#147 | New Zealand |
| WL#101 | Italy | | WL#148 | Nicaragua |
| WL#102 | Jamaica | | WL#149 | Niger |
| WL#103 | Japan | | WL#150 | Nigeria |
| WL#104 | Jordan | | WL#151 | North Korea |
| WL#105 | Kazakhstan | | WL#152 | Norway |
| WL#106 | Kenya | | WL#153 | The Occupied Palestinian Territories*** |
| WL#107 | Kiribati | | WL#154 | Oman |
| WL#108 | Kosovo | | WL#155 | Pakistan |
| WL#109 | Kuwait | | WL#156 | Palau |
| WL#110 | Kyrgyzstan | | WL#157 | Panama |
| WL#111 | Laos | | WL#158 | Papua New Guinea |
| WL#112 | Latvia | | WL#159 | Paraguay |
| WL#113 | Lebanon | | WL#160 | Peru |
| WL#114 | Lesotho | | WL#161 | Philippines |
| WL#115 | Liberia | | WL#162 | Pitcairn Island* |
| WL#116 | Libya | | WL#163 | Poland |
| WL#117 | Liechtenstein | | WL#164 | Portugal |
| WL#118 | Lithuania | | WL#165 | Qatar |
| WL#119 | Luxembourg | | WL#166 | Romania |
| WL#120 | Macao*** | | WL#167 | Russia |
| WL#121 | Macedonia | | WL#168 | Rwanda |
| WL#122 | Madagascar | | WL#169 | Réunion** |
| WL#123 | Malawi | | WL#170 | Saint-Barthélemy** |
| WL#124 | Malaysia | | WL#171 | Samoa |
| WL#125 | Maldives | | WL#172 | San Marino |
| WL#126 | Mali | | WL#173 | Saudi Arabia |
| WL#127 | Malta | | WL#174 | Senegal |
| WL#128 | Marshall Islands | | WL#175 | Serbia |
| WL#129 | Martinique** | | WL#176 | Seychelles |
| WL#130 | Mauritania | | WL#177 | Sierra Leone |
| WL#131 | Mauritius | | WL#178 | Singapore |
| WL#132 | Mayotte** | | WL#179 | Slovakia |
| WL#133 | Mexico | | WL#180 | Slovenia |
| WL#134 | Micronesia | | WL#181 | Solomon Islands |
| WL#135 | Moldova | | WL#182 | Somalia |
| WL#136 | Monaco | | WL#183 | South Africa |
| WL#137 | Mongolia | | WL#184 | South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands* |
| WL#138 | Montenegro | | WL#185 | South Korea |
| WL#139 | Montserrat* | | WL#186 | South Sudan |
| WL#140 | Morocco | | WL#187 | Spain |
| WL#141 | Mozambique | | WL#188 | Sri Lanka |

| Code | Location | Code | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| WL#189 | St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha* | WL#214 | Turks & Caicos Islands* |
| WL#190 | St Kitts and Nevis | WL#215 | Tuvalu |
| WL#191 | St Lucia | WL#216 | USA |
| WL#192 | St Maarten** | WL#217 | Ukraine |
| WL#193 | St Martin** | WL#218 | United Arab Emirates |
| WL#194 | St Pierre & Miquelon** | WL#219 | Uganda |
| WL#195 | St Vincent and The Grenadines | WL#220 | Uruguay |
| WL#196 | Sudan | WL#221 | Uzbekistan |
| WL#197 | Suriname | WL#222 | Vanuatu |
| WL#198 | Swaziland | WL#223 | Venezuela |
| WL#199 | Sweden | WL#224 | Vietnam |
| WL#200 | Switzerland | WL#225 | Wallis and Futuna** |
| WL#201 | Syria | WL#226 | Western Sahara*** |
| WL#202 | São Tomé and Principe | WL#227 | Yemen |
| WL#203 | Taiwan | WL#228 | Zambia |
| WL#204 | Tajikistan | WL#229 | Zimbabwe |
| WL#205 | Tanzania | WL#230 | The UK Permanent Delegation to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) |
| WL#206 | Thailand | WL#231 | UK and the Commonwealth^ |
| WL#207 | Timor Leste | WL#232 | UK Delegation to Council of Europe^ |
| WL#208 | Togo | WL#233 | UK Delegation to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe^ |
| WL#209 | Tonga | WL#234 | UK Joint Delegation to NATO^ |
| WL#210 | Trinidad & Tobago | WL#235a | UK Mission to the United Nations, Geneva^ |
| WL#211 | Tunisia | WL#235b | UK Mission to the United Nations, New York^ |
| WL#212 | Turkey | WL#235c | UK Mission to the United Nations, Vienna^ |
| WL#213 | Turkmenistan | WL#236 | UK Representation to the EU^ |

**Legend:**
- *British overseas territory and regions.
- **Other countries' overseas territories (France, Netherlands and the USA).
- ***Special international or unresolved status.
- ^British membership with international organisations and unions.
- There are 238 entries, but coding is different as we use the same numerical number for three UN entries; hence, coding stops at 236.
- Listed locations are identified by (1) our reference code and (2) the official title.

**Figure 3-7:** 238 Worldwide Locations - reflective of 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016 research timeframe.
Source: www.gov.uk/world

## HOW: Associated Methodologies and Protocols

Now that we have clarified our WHY, WHEN, WHO and WHAT, we can focus on HOW we plan to capture, format, analyse and contextualise all the data for the benefit of our two analytical chapters. Even though we will try to be as systematic and detailed as possible, it is important to note that additional clarifications will be provided in a subsequent *Preamble* and *Chapters #05* and *#06* as we put our research design to the test. We are confident that the following methodologies and data protocols will provide sufficient insight as to how we plan to contextualise *GOV.uk* as *InfoAttention Marketplace*.

### *Research Currencies: Info-Flows and Web Analytics*
**GOV.uk info flows [supply of government information]**

Info-flow types are clustered under the umbrella of one of the three collections: Publications, Announcements and Statistics - which provides an additional level of agenda analysis (see figure 3-8). Therefore, a single info-flow is not just a unit that helps us define the government's Supply-output; it is also a multifaceted signal which can help us decode the agenda-attention dynamics across the UK Policy Platform.

However, info-flow types are not equally distributed across the three collections. Publications lead the way with 18 different types, while the Announcements have six and Statistics, well just one type/format – the statistics itself. Such organisational typology suggests that the coordinative aspect of the agenda-attention is much more diverse, both in terms of its volume and type of supplied government information. Regardless of these classifications and contextual alignments, for the sake of our research we are observing and computing each info-flow as a 'single-unit-of-observation.' When it comes to defining the ranking order and the frequency of the agenda-attention, we are not making a distinction between a publication or the announcement; nor are we for that matter assigning different grades to policy papers or press releases.

If we are to venture into that territory and attach an agenda-value to an info-flow based solely on its categorisation, we would find ourselves trapped in a complex web of ethical norms and subjective analysis. Hence, why our approach to observing an info-flow as a single-attention-unit (volume and frequency) may prove to be a more reflective, less biased and much more resilient method when decoding the frequency of government's agenda.

| Publications (n18) | | | Statistics (n1) | | Announcements (n6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Consultations** | | | Statistics | | Fatality notices |
| *All consultations:* | | | | | Government responses |
| Open consultations | | | | | News stories |
| Closed consultations | | | | | Press releases |
| **Corporate** | | | | | Speeches |
| Corporate reports | | | | | Statements |
| FOI releases | | | | | |
| Transparency data | | | | | |
| **Policy & Guidance** | | | | | |
| Correspondence | | Impact Assessments | | Policy papers | |
| Guidance | | Independent reports | | | |
| **Other** | | | | | |
| Decisions | | Forms | | | |
| International treaties | | Maps | | | |
| Notices | | Promotional material | | | |
| Regulations | | | | | |
| **Research** | | | | | |
| Research & analysis | | | | | |

**Figure 3-8:** Type of info-flows that are published by the government on GOV.uk portal – organised by their affiliation to the Publications, Announcements and Statistics' collections. Source: www.GOV.uk

**Web Analytics – Pageviews and Unique Visitors [demand for government information]**

Since its launch, each visit to *GOV.uk* and every click has been recorded by the *GDS* analytics software - gradually building a vast repository of information about users' preferences and behavioural characteristics across the platform. As such, the government is in a unique position to translate users' digital footprint and behavioural characteristics on the site as a form of (in)direct feedback by monitoring citizens' interests and orientation in real-time. Therefore, *GOV.uk* web-traffic analytics can be used to formulate the public agenda (what people want to think about) and help us construct our *Detector* domain – a Demand-input for information.

Although this data is both digital and open, accessing and formatting separate sets was not as straightforward as one would anticipate. Foremost, most of the data was displayed in real-time, and one had to apply an algorithmic intervention to access historical records and re-format results to make them comparable for further analysis. In some cases, we had to file an *FOI* request in order to obtain relevant information. Secondly, the *GDS* team has decided to communicate only the most relevant web-traffic categories, which means we had to work with what was available. Luckily, those categories were applicable for all Ministerial departments but were much more limited when observing *GOV.uk* as the entire site, which explains why we have decided to focus only on pageviews, and user visits data as it was applicable, both for GOV.uk as a platform and for landing pages of 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments.

We believe that the best way to compute a macro perspective of the Demand-input is to focus on the number of unique visitors and pageviews. After all, these variables are most telling when decoding the public's interest as they tell us how many people are engaging (unique visitors) with the government on GOV.uk and what they want to think about (pageviews). Even though we are unable to compute the actual result of that engagement (what happens after they download a policy paper or read a press release), we can still make evidence-based assertions when it comes to our ability to compute the frequency of the publics' agenda-attention - which is the focus of this research.

### *Computing the Agenda-Attention Frequency (supply-demand dynamics)*

In order to compute policy and public agenda-attention, we will focus on the supply and demand dynamics of our two 'research currencies'. On the one hand, the policy agenda-attention will be observed in the context of published government info-flows on *GOV.uk* (supply of information). On the other hand, the public agenda-attention will be reflected in 'pageviews' data – how many times users visit the observed webpages (demand for information). These two 'data-chambers' will present an alternative way of calculating the agenda-attention frequency, a priority ranking and level of(mis)alignment between agendas.

By examining macro agenda-attention patterns shaped by the *Supply-output* of government info-flows and *Demand-input* by the public for government information within the *GOV.uk* realm we can establish a numerical baseline that we can use as a benchmark when determining the *agenda-attention-market-share* of the actionable government priorities. In turn, we will map out the scope and scale of our *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* as we seek to understand how 24+2 departments, 47 policy areas, 219 individual policies, 49 topical events and 237 worldwide locations are prioritised and ranked along the *Agenda-Attention Continuum*. Therefore, our agenda-attention methodology will allow us to highlight which actionable items are more likely to excel in the context of their policy cluster and which ones can dominate the agenda-attention. If we observe 357 departments, agencies and other public bodies residing on GOV.uk, both as the 'publishers' of government information and the 'recipients' of public attention, it is important to establish how supply/demand indicators are redistributed across these entities.

### *Establishing a macro Supply-output of government info-flows [Effector]*

To help us devise a baseline benchmark, we will apply two perspectives:
- Compute the overall number of published info-flows on *GOV.uk* between May 2010 and May 2016 to determine the *agenda-attention-market-share* for info-flows based

on their primary association (publications – statistics – announcements). This benchmark will help us determine if the government is more proactive in *coordinative-agenda* (publications) or the *communicative-agenda* (announcements) domain, and how the *statistical input* is trending along the spectrum;

- Determine how the info-flow *agenda-attention-market-share* is distributed among the *agenda-shapers* in the context of two key power-groups: (1) *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* – the apex of the government; and (2) remaining 331 departments, public bodies and agencies residing on *GOV.uk*. Such calculations will help us determine if the agenda is indeed driven by the 'apex' and how those power dynamics are reflected in the context of coordinative, statistical and communicative agendas.

- *Supply-output* will be computed in the form of 'info-flows' published between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016 by 24+2 Ministerial departments on GOV.uk – focusing only on active 'info-flows' that is accessible to the public without any restrictions. We will treat each 'info-flow' equally (1 info-flow = 1 observational unit of the agenda-attention), as they will not be graded based on their content or categorisation (perceived agenda-importance). They will be calculated in terms of their volume and incidence, not because they come in the form of a policy paper or because they focus on national security.

### *Establishing a macro Demand-input for government information [Detector]*

This baseline benchmark will be defined in terms of available GOV.uk performance data (March 2014 – May 2016) that records users' behavioural characteristics across the platform – a process that we observe as an expression of public agenda (what the citizens want to think about). Even though the number of pageviews will be our primary research currency, we have decided to analyse the number of visitors data to form a broader picture of the level of public attentiveness across the platform. As such, our principal objective is to highlight how the Demand-input for information is distributed among four key clusters: (1) overall GOV.uk platform – includes all pages; (2) GOV.uk homepage; (3) landing pages for 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments – presented as a combined figure for all 26 entities; and (4) data relating to landing pages for nine key 'menu' categories. Such categorisation will help us determine how public attention is distributed across the system and preferred GOV.uk navigational routes.

Demand-input will be decoded by observing GOV.uk web-traffic data that has been collected and published by the GDS between March 2014 and May 2016. Regarding our research scope, we will only focus on the analytics that reflects GOV.uk as a particular site, 24+2 Ministerial

departments, individual policies that belong to the 'Foreign Affairs' policy area and a selection of top locations (based on their aggregated 'info-flow' output). While the web-traffic analytics can capture user's behavioural characteristics within GOV.uk, we can now translate those visits and clicks into measurable units of publics' attention. For the first time, we can compute the public's agenda (demand for information) connected to what the government wants you to know (supply of information) in a more accurate and less biased manner. Thus, it allows us to test how in-sync are the policy and public agendas for certain domains.

### Observing what happens when the Supply-output meets Demand-input

This will be our first opportunity to examine how (miss)aligned are the institutional and public agendas in the context of GOV.uk supply-demand dynamics. However, due to data-limitations44 from the demand-side of the equation, we will structure our analysis into two parts: the macro perspective will allow us to compare the two agendas in terms of their annual output/input dynamics using March 2014 – May 2016 data-sets. At this level, we are using aggregated data (all policy clusters and pageviews) to determine if two agendas show alignment characteristics within the same year. At the same time, the micro perspective will help us examine (miss)alignment dynamics within the policy clusters and in the context of 201545 data. As we cannot equate the value of one 'info-flow' with a corresponding value of a 'single pageview', we will identify the alignment factor in terms of their shared 25-50-25 priority associations (if an actionable item resides within the same priority domain, we will say that the two agendas are aligned) - whilst arguing that such pattern may indicate a formation of a policy window.

### Data Accessibility and Standardisation

**Data Accessibility:** we are only using open and digital information that is accessible via the GOV.uk web portal. However, we had to file a Freedom of Information request for the pageview data sets that the GDS did not publish on their Performance section. In the process, we were able to obtain request data without any restrictions or delays and are confident that other researcher would be able to do the same as long as they clearly defined request and URL references. Overall, we were able to show that all the relevant information can be located, accessed and collected without any restrictions and need for sophisticated software.

**Standardisation:** to make the ranking order more comparable between different policy clusters, we have decided to organise the agenda-continuum into three contextual parts: (1) Top 25% - green area; (2) Middle 50% - yellow area; and (3) Bottom 25% - orange area (see figure 5-1). By applying this formula, we would be able to observe and compare institutional

priorities across the policy platform and not just within the individual policy clusters. As such, each item will have its agenda-attention ranking order (vertical flow - based on a number of associated info-flows) and its contextual priority (horizontal 25-50-25 association). While this approach will help us compare different policy elements, it will not try to equalise their policy mandates – for example, even if the Tax and Revenue policy area and the NATO Summit Wales 2014 topical event are at the Top 25% of the continuum, they will continue to maintain their distinct agenda status for the respective audience. However, we will highlight that they share a common (top priority) thread regarding institutional preferences, even though they operate in different policy contexts. That additional layer of analysis is beneficial when constructing the big picture.

### *Agenda-Attention Perspectives*

It is only applicable to the policy agenda, and it will help us determine if the ranking order of actionable government priorities changes when switching from one agenda perspective to another. While the 'Aggregated' perspective (baseline benchmark against which all other comparisons will be made) will refer to all published info-flows by a department or the observed policy platform cluster. The 'Coordinative' perspective will refer only to info-flows associated with the 'Publications' collection (formulating and implementing policy); and the 'Communicative' perspective to info-flows published as part of the 'Announcements' collection (explaining and mainstreaming policy). These categorisations are very useful in terms of our ability to contextualise the UK Policy Platform in terms of three distinct agenda-perspectives:

- *Publications* are the most extensive collection with 18 different info-flow types, making it the largest of three by default. The publishing tends to be more planned and cyclical as it requires more planning and adherence to pre-set rules and timetables. These info-flow types tend to reflect the government's coordinative-agenda through policy formulation, guidance, regulation, consultation, reporting and transparency;

- *Announcements* collection with its six info-flow types reflects the government's communicative-agenda and its directive to mainstream policy, manage public campaigns and inform citizens about government's activity, services and events. As such, are much more reactive in their nature as their directive to inform the public, communicate government's activity and amplify the policy is not guided so much by timetables as it is by the external events and (un)planned changes in policymaking;

- *Statistics* collection (single info-flow) is a data-driven agenda, as its volume and frequency are very much dependent on the department's organisational capacity to

unlock its data-silos. Some departments may produce more data than others, while the cyclical nature of available data may condition the output. Such a pattern may reflect organisational changes behind the scene, as more departments embrace the Open-meets-Digital protocols by releasing data at regular intervals.

### *Agenda-Attention Continuum and Ranking Order of Priorities*

While the official Agenda List specifies government priorities, it does not tell us which one gets more attention and when. Therefore, by attaching the agenda-attention value to Policy Areas, Individual Policies, Topical Events and Worldwide Locations on our list, we will be able to materialise an internal ranking order and observe the (re)prioritisation process. We envision the GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum as a (1) horizontal axis where all the actionable government priorities are listed in the context of their topic-policy-event-location cluster; and (2) vertical axis where the actionable government priorities are ranked according to their perceived institutional preferences. Those associated with a larger number of published info-flows will rise to the top, and those with lower numbers will move towards the end of the continuum. This approach gives us great flexibility, as one can use annual, monthly, or daily data to reconstitute the ranking order and assess how actionable government priorities fluctuate along the continuum as policy conditions change.

**Ranking Order:** the frequency of the agenda-attention will determine the position of each item along the agenda-continuum. It means that each department, policy area, individual policy, topical event and worldwide location will be ranked in terms of aggregated number of associated info-flows. Also, each entry will be positioned along the agenda-continuum in the context of its policy cluster. The reason why we are using aggregated (2010-2016) and not annual data to compute the agenda-attention ranking order is three-fold: (1) the objective of this section is to look at the big picture, and aggregated data is most suited for establishing a macro perspective; (2) it allows us to present actionable government priorities in the context of two administrative mandates: the full-term of the Coalition government (2010-15) and the first year of the Conservative party rule (2015-16); and (3) due to inconsistency in available data, we can make sure that all five policy clusters can be analysed on equal terms if using aggregated data sets. For example, while we have annual info-flow data for the departments, policy areas and individual policies, we only have aggregated data (all six years combined) for the topical events and worldwide locations.

### Data Accessibility and Reusability (Open-meets-Digital approach)

We are only using open and digital information that is accessible via the *GOV.uk* web portal. However, we had to file a *Freedom of Information* request for the pageview data sets that the *GDS* did not publish on their *Performance* section. In the process, we were able to obtain request data without any restrictions or delays and are confident that other researcher would be able to do the same as long as they clearly defined request and *URL* references. Overall, we were able to show that all the relevant information can be located, accessed and collected without any restrictions and need for sophisticated software.

### Data Longevity (backup records)

Even though we consider *GOV.uk* to be a resourceful and user-friendly platform for agenda-attention research, we also must acknowledge the constraints and challenges that one faces when dealing with the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct. First, we have to remind ourselves that if data is open and digital, it does not mean that it is permanent. Information can be easily removed, edited or reclassified - what you see today may not be accessible tomorrow. Therefore, one has to be very organised when it comes to data collection and ensure that relevant information is preserved in a suitable format. If one cannot download large datasets, it is advisable to save relevant URLs and make screenshots. In that way, if the information is missing or amended, one can use web-based tools to retrieve historic cached records and combine screenshots to retrace its steps and extract relevant information.

In conclusion, we have devised a research design methodology matrix (see figure 3-9) as a quick reference guide for our analytical chapters. On the one hand, these tables define our research currencies, timeframes and use of large/small N to accomplish the analysis. On the other hand, they clarify key attributes and indicators for policy and public agenda-attention. Combined, they present a blueprint for our research design. The table summarises the overall methodology in the context of the *InfoAttention Marketplace* model and *GOV.uk* data matrix. In that way, we will have a quick reference guide that is based on a detailed research design as we construct our analytical chapters. It shows us which data elements and processes are aligned with policy and public agendas and how we intend to observe each data-chamber in terms of large/small N and associated timeframes.

## 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments

**Institutional agenda preferences**
*(what government wants you to know)*

**Public attentiveness to policy issues**
*(what people want to think about)*

*EFFECTORS (supply)*
- **GOV.uk Info-Flows**

*DETECTORS (demand)*
- **GOV.uk Web Analytics (pageviews)**

*large-N:* **24+2 Cabinet-level departments**
*small-N:* **FCO department**

## 47 Policy Areas

**Institutional agenda preferences**
*(what government wants you to know)*

**Public attentiveness to policy issues**
 *(what people want to think about)*

*EFFECTORS (supply)*
- **GOV.uk Info-Flows**

*DETECTORS (demand)*
- **GOV.uk Web Analytics (pageviews)**

*large-N:* **47 policy areas**
*small-N:* **'Foreign Affairs' policy area**

## 219 Individual Policies

**Institutional agenda preferences**
*(what government wants you to know)*

**Public attentiveness to policy issues**
*(what people want to think about)*

*EFFECTORS (supply)*
- **GOV.uk Info-Flows**

*DETECTORS (demand)*
- **GOV.uk Web Analytics (pageviews)**

*large-N:* **219 policies**
*small-N:* **21 policies** *(aligned with the 'Foreign Affairs' policy area umbrella)*

## 238 Worldwide Locations

**Institutional agenda preferences**
*(what government wants you to know)*

**Public attentiveness to policy issues**
*(what people want to think about)*

*EFFECTORS (supply)*
- **GOV.uk Info-Flows**

*DETECTORS (demand)*
- **GOV.uk Web Analytics (pageviews)**

*large-N:* **238 locations**
*small-N:* **15-19 locations** *(sample based on the largest number of aggregated info-flows)*

## 49 Topical Events

**Institutional agenda preferences**
*(what government wants you to know)*

*EFFECTORS (supply)*
- **GOV.uk Info-Flows**

*large-N:* **49 topical events**

*Due to temporal nature of tis cluster, we are only observing the supply-side dynamics using the large-N sample.*

## Timelines

| | |
|---|---|
| **MACRO** | |
| 10 May 2010 | |
| 10 May 2016 | |
| **MESSO** | |
| 1 March 2014 | |
| 10 May 2016 | |
| **MICRO** | |
| 1 January – 31 December 2015 | |

**Figure 3-9:** Research Design Methodology Matrix I – a quick reference guide for data analysis. Constructed by M Norderland (2020).

## Existing Agenda-Attention Approaches

As we focus on institutional preferences and actionable government priorities, we must examine *Policy Agenda* frameworks relevant to our research design and methodology. In the process, we will reflect on *Incrementalism, Agenda-Building, Punctuated Equilibrium, Issue-Attention Cycle*, *Multiple Policy Streams / 'Garbage Can' model, Focused Adaptation and Four "P"s of the Agenda-Setting* concepts. Foremost, because these approaches tend to analyse the entire [institutional] agenda process, use longitudinal case-study methods, and propose a complete agenda-formation model. Moreover, some of their insights are relevant to our research design. They focus on the level of attention attributed to specific policy domains and how it changes over time. We are using this section to note their key attributes and characteristics for reference purposes. Whilst some of those characteristics will be highlighted in the analytical chapters, the focus will be on our last chapter as we assert the applicability of our findings and methodology for each approach separately. We feel that it's important to show alignments and attachments between existing theoretical frameworks and evolving nature of the agenda-attention.

### *Incrementalism (Lindblom et al.)*

From the early days of public policy studies, a stream of scholars has observed policy change as an evolutionary process that is comprised of gradual, non-disruptive and small-scale adjustments (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953; Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963; Davis et al. 1966; Lindblom 1959, 1979; Wildavsky, 1984). As competing interests, cross-party conflict, shifting public opinion, and powerful veto agents contribute to national politics fragmentation, the governments tend to 'muddle' through by default. Therefore, as long as those in power remain convinced that the distribution of political and economic capital is appropriate, a deviation from the predetermined norms is unlikely. Similarly, with its capacity to limit or resist calls for radical change even during the crisis, the political system prefers incremental decision-making. Foremost, because it is better suited for the routine nature of the bureaucratic and legislative process that depends on predictability and order (John et al. 2013). Such observations suggest that policy change occurs only on the periphery of the agenda-continuum as "what will be the case tomorrow will not differ radically from what exists today" (Lindblom, 1979; p.517). Even if the status quo is disrupted with a rapid or unconventional elevation of an issue from obscurity to prominence, in terms of its implementation, a more incremental style may still prevail (Etzioni, 1967).

However, for *Incrementalism* to withstand the test of time, one requires a great deal of stability in the policy/political system and resilience when responding to unexpected external shocks. Hence, why many scholars have questioned the claim that the policy process proceeds relatively unchallenged; for example, an unanticipated political win can disrupt the traditional distribution of power and challenge how policy is implemented (Castels,1982; Hoffebert and Budge 1992). A significant change can also happen inadvertently across the system when a 'quick-policy-win' requires 'joined-up' government intervention across multiple domains. Not to mention that a high-magnitude external shock can disrupt existing consensus and alter the power structures, leading to significant policy changes (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Although these examples can challenge *Incrementalism*, there are plenty of other scenarios that can confirm its existence. Mainly because there is no agreement as to how one can measure or define an 'increment.' The lack of standardisation makes comparison across studies challenging to achieve (Berry, 1990), and in the absence of a coherent definition, many scholars have concluded that *Incrementalism* had been "thoroughly rooted" (Jones 2001; p.142).

## The Issue Attention Cycle (Downs)

In contrast to some of our reviewed scholars, *Downs* focuses on citizen influence which he traces through the '*Issue Attention Cycle*.' He argues that problems usually gain attention because of a crisis, and suddenly public and other agenda-setters are focusing on the issue. However, that initial enthusiasm is short-lived as "public attention rarely remains sharply focused upon any domestic issue for very long – even if it involves a continuing problem of crucial importance to society" (Downs, 1972; p.39). In the process, he has identified five stages that can be used as a model to compute public agenda-setting effect:

1. *pre-Problem*: surveying the environment and public sentiment before a particular issue attracts public attention. In the majority of cases, citizens, media, or the government may be concerned, but they are not addressing the causes or consequences of the problem;

2. The second phase is marked by a ***sudden discovery, a shock event, or a disruptive adaptation***. Suddenly, for better or for worse, the issue is at the epicentre of everyone's attention as different agenda groups are keen to solve the problem;

3. As ***public interest reaches critical mass***, reality-check is activated, and the public becomes aware of the costs attached to solving the particular issue. In some cases, those can be financial, but in others, they can affect lives (e.g. sending troops to a

conflict zone) or livelihoods as required changes can disrupt peoples' lifestyles (e.g. adoption of disruptive technology);

4. Initial enthusiasm, now dampened by reality-check, can cause a **sharp decline in public enthusiasm** to pursue the issue. As a solution to the problem is too costly or complicated, overall interests fade, and the issue moves back to the periphery of our attention; *and*

5. **Post-Problem**: the issue is no longer an actionable government priority, but that does not mean that some progress has not been made – policies enacted, new agencies launched, or legislations passed. As such, some form of legacy will remain, as endorsed policies or organisations continue to exist even though they may lack a mandate.

Although his model explains the cyclical nature of public attention to policy issues; he never claimed that all issues go through this cycle; thus, the model is not a general theory of agenda-setting. Some may say that the cycle is only applicable to the issues that can quickly move back to the periphery of our attention because they affect a minority of the population. Similarly, some researchers forget to account for the *post-Problem* factor. On average, the issue will retain a higher agenda-attention than those who have not been through the cycle. If the issue is propelled back to the epicentre, the *pre-Problem* conditions will not be reintroduced. Some scholars have linked *Down's* approach back to political processes, and the institutional legacy that often remains long after interest in a policy has waned (Nelson, 1984; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 1995). While some critics point out that the model has not been tested systematically (Peters and Hogwood, 1985) and that significant agenda shifts have the potential to stay in place (Baumgartner and Jones, 2009).

### Multiple Policy Streams and the Garbage Can Model (Kingdon)

*John Kingdon's* original work from 1984 is often seen as a significant contribution to our current understanding of where policy issues come from and how policies tend to be adopted – at least from the U.S. federal government's perspective. He defines the agenda as "a list of subjects or problems to which government officials and people outside of government are paying some serious attention to at any given time (Kingdon, 1995; p.3). Furthermore, he explains that "the agenda-setting process narrows this set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention" (Kingdon, 1995; p.3). In the process, he considers various contributing factors to the agenda-setting, such as presidential attention, the significance of problem definition, policy change over time, interest group pressure, media coverage, and public opinion. Therefore, in contrast to *Cobb and Elder*, his theory sustains a

longitudinal examination of agenda-setting whilst accounting for many influences upon the process.

Central to our study is *Kingdon's 'Garbage Can'* model inspired by *Cohen, March and Olsen's* organisational choice model. Their original work from 1972 reflects on a decision-making process as anarchistic and highly unstable due to (1) problematic preferences; (2) unclear technology; and (3) fluid participation. As such, this organisational model is nothing more than a "collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision-makers looking for work" (Cohen, March and Olsen; 1972; p.2). In conclusion, such a process was compared to a "garbage can into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated" (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972; p.2). Following this metaphor, *Kingdon* has readapted a *'Garbage Can'* model to account for the *U.S. federal government* characteristics and three major process streams:  (1) problem recognition; (2) the formation and refining of policy proposals; and (3) politics (Kingdon, 1995; p.86-87). In his view, streams that run through the organisation tend to have a life of its own, and only when those streams meet at the critical intersection do we see a coupling effect which in turn can produce the "greatest agenda change" (Kingdon, 1995; p86-87).

As noted previously, we have to be aware that various problems attract the attention of different agents within and around government – further stressing the importance of understanding "how and why one set of problems rather than another comes to occupy official's attention" (Kingdon, 1995; p.87). Second, we are reminded that the political elite is also influenced by a well-established policy community of specialist (bureaucrats, advisors, academics, interest groups, and staffers) whose job is to generate proposals (alternatives) and engage in active lobbying and/or bargaining process to propel their solutions at the expense of others (Kingdon, 1995; p.87). Third, this approach highlights the volatility of the 'political stream' as related events occur independently of 'problems and solutions streams' primarily due to their unpredictable nature – reflected in shifts in public opinion, election results, change of administration, shifts in ideology, and intensity of interest groups pressure campaigns (Kingdon, 1995; p.87).

When combined, Kingdon symbolically describes how problems, alternatives and political actors fluctuate in a policy arena by randomly bumping into each other (Kingdon, 1984). His *'Multiple Stream'* theory also considers multiple determinants of policy agenda, including the mass media as one of the multiple streams feeding into the system. In such circumstances, it is

difficult to predict when the political agenda will adopt a particular solution and, in return, materialise policy change because each of the streams acts, either as an impetus or as a constraint to the desired policy outcome. According to *Kingdon*, a convergence of the three streams "pushes issues to higher agenda prominence" (1995; p.85-86) and onto the "decision agenda" (1995; p.201-203), often as the result of the so-called 'policy window' (an opportunity to initiate change). *Kingdon* argues that "policy windows open when there is a change in the political stream (a new administration or a shift in the national mood), they remain open for only a short time, and they offer opportunities for action (agenda-setting) by policy entrepreneurs" (1995; p.179- 183). In the process, participants or 'policy entrepreneurs' must seize the opportunity to act and propel their solutions, in turn, if they "cannot or do not take advantage of such an opportunity, they must bide their time until the next policy window opens" (Kingdon, 1995; p.184-190).

In addition to the *'Garbage Can'* model and *'Multiple Streams'* theory, we can also observe *Kingdon's* distinction between agenda-setting and the generation of policy alternatives (solutions) because of their incremental nature in contrast to fluctuating agenda-setting changes especially, as a "viable alternative or solution must be available before an issue can attain a position on a decision agenda" (Kingdon 1995; p.16-18). Whilst *Schattschneider* describes alternatives in the context of a democratic and competitive political system "in which competing leaders and organisations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process" (1975; p.138). For *Kingdon,* alternatives are generated by policy specialists to whom he refers to as "the hidden cluster of participants" (1995; p.200-201). As such, he sees no role for the public in this process since most people lack the knowledge and expertise to make a meaningful contribution to the overall process. He also notes the importance of an early warning system in the form of external events, crises, and symbols as they direct attention to something that is "already on people's minds, they function as an early warning, and they often result in a redefinition of the problem" (Kingdon, 1995; p.90-98).

## *Punctuated Equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones)*

*Baumgartner and Jones* emphasise the importance of observing a policy process over several years to account for conditions that generate significant system fluctuations. In the process, they have noticed that decision making can be marked by long periods of stability during which policy issue receives little or no attention at all, only to be interrupted by a brief (and in most cases sudden – unplanned) periods of upheaval (1993; p.18-21). The fluctuation between the

equilibrium of gradual adjustments and rapid policy change periods is central to their work and is known as *'Punctuated Equilibrium'*. *In Kingdon's* view, this is not a theory but a claim of how focusing events affect the decision-making process (1995). However, *Baumgartner and Jones* do not think that the policymaking is controlled by policy subsystems composed of a "hidden cluster of participants" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.21). Instead, they suggest that only when "new participants gain access to the policy process that policy subsystems are disrupted, change is possible, and issues rise to the top of the national agenda" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.20). In the process, a 'positive feedback' is formed as issues have enough incentive and momentum to initiate policy change (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.125). Subsequently, policymakers may be compelled to focus on new issues at others' expense once a large change in priorities punctuates equilibrium periods. As a result, "some problems gain disproportionate attention from many policy venues" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.250).

Similar to *Kingdon*, they also use a three-stream analogy when analysing the agenda-setting process. In their case, the first stream deals with policy change and how new issues are selected (1993). The second stream is concerned with policy subsystems and their ability to insulate organisational arrangements and potentially encourage stability (1993). While the last stream, a social-choice perspective, "examines equilibrium processes and the mobilisation of bias, a concept central to *Schattschneider's* theory" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.237-238). One of the core arguments is that political systems do not react proportionally to incoming signals (information) because of the friction in the process (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005). As the *'Punctuated Equilibrium'* theory rests on the concept of disproportionate information processing— significant attention is given to analysis as to why some signals get attention while others are neglected. Subsequently, this can be related to the origin of the information, the ambiguity and uncertainty of incoming signals – as some "information is unreliable while other is solid" (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005 p.29-86).

Also, they make a critical distinction between direct and indirect information when explaining the agenda-attention dynamics (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005). In their view, direct information is based on real-world evidence or events, and as such, it is often not readily available and lacks a precise meaning. Due to the high cost of procuring and managing direct information, most agents tend to resort to indirect information (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005). As a result, such information comes via secondary sources, such as media that make them publicly available and different interest groups (competitors) whose objective is to conceal such information. Therefore, their fresh perspective emphasises the development of "new alternatives and policy change through the redefinition of old issues" (Baumgartner and

Jones, 1993; p.11). In contrast to *Kingdon*, they regard media interest as a critical factor in the agenda-setting process and public opinion as an elemental realm for the agenda process (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; p.248).

### The Four "P"s of Agenda-Setting (Zahariadis)

In an effort to make a "subsequent account of theoretical models more comprehensible and meaningful", Zahariadis argues that the process of agenda-setting, in its most basic arrangement, contains four fundamental [P] elements (2016; p7/8):

1. **POWER** is defined as one of the most important elements in the agenda-setting process. As such, the actionable government priorities reflect the power of some groups or actors to propel the issues from the periphery to the epicentre of government, public and/or media attention. If an issue is to shift from public to institutional agenda and ultimately to a decision stage, we need to see a movement across agendas. From one domain to another, such a transition requires the power to persuade that some issues are more important or urgent than others.

2. **PERCEPTION** affects how we see issues, which we deem to be more important than others, and rationalise that selection. After all, numerous issues deserve government attention, but only a selected few at any given time can capture and sustain the movement across the agendas until they are officially classified as a public policy issue that requires coordinated action.

3. **POTENCY** refers to the intensity of a particular issue, and Zahariadis states that the "greater severity of consequences, the more salient the issue(s) will be on the government's agenda."

4. **PROXIMITY** element suggests that people are more likely to pay attention to an issue or an event if it appears to have a more direct or immediate impact on their lives, both in terms of the geographic adjacency (local/national vs international) and temporal association (what is happening now vs what may occur in the future). Therefore, proximity may be critical as to how people shape their outlook – the more direct impact on their safety, livelihood or a 'way of life' the issue has, the greater the level of attention it may generate.

This model promotes a particular view of how the "P" elements are interconnected and which ones have (in)direct effect on the agenda. It suggests that *'Power'* and *'Perception'*, while mutually dependent on each other, are more critical than those directly linked to the agenda. While *'Potency'* and *'Proximity'*, who also exhibit a mutually supportive relationship, have a more secondary role in the process as their influence is filtered through *'Power'* and *'Potency'*. While Zahariadis does not dispute that different theoretical models may contain additional components and could necessitate a (re)configuration of links between these elements, he believes that they all have to address the four "P"s in some shape or form. Therefore, one could assert that *'Power'* and *'Perception'* could operate in a more independent role as they have a direct link to the *'Agenda'* but their ability to influence the overall agenda-setting process is conditioned by the dynamics of a circular interdependency among all four *"P"*

elements. In essence, we are told that no matter how complex or straightforward the policy issue may be, we cannot examine an agenda-setting process without these four structural elements in place.

### Focused Adaptation (John, Bertelli, Jennings and Bevan)

In their *'Policy Agendas in British Politics'* book, *John, Bertelli, Jennings, and Bevan* aim to develop a "heuristic for examining the evolution of policy attention that builds on foregoing approaches" (2013; p.10). They claim that policy change can not necessarily be attributed to a single concept during the entire process. Instead, they propose that policy agenda can show multiple characteristics of previously discussed concepts. As such, it is plausible that we can encounter incrementalism, punctuated equilibrium and/or issue attention at different stages of the process. Their objective was to determine if "such changes are sustained in time, reflecting a change in the underlying structure of the mechanism that generates policy priorities (John, Bertelli, Jennings and Bevan, 2013; p.10).

Their approach has four criteria (2013; p.10/11):

1. *A re-election-seeking government controls a mechanism that generates substantive attention to public policy topics in spite of significant pressure on the policy agenda from the media and public opinion.*

2. *A landscape, or population, of policy problems exists and that voters are concerned that government allocates attention to those policy problems, though not all problems impact all voters.*

3. *Government searches this problem landscape to learn its characteristics. This search includes assessing information about mass and elite views of the relative importance of particular problems.*

4. *Armed with that information, government adjusts its policymaking attention mechanism to reflect what it has learned to pursue its electoral goals.*

They also identify three characteristics of policymaking systems that affect the search process: (1) institutions and political parties have pre-set preferences that can constrain adaptation; (2) the length of electoral cycles can affect the level of attention that is designated to specific issues, as some policies can be rushed through with limited information; and (3) the "pattern of the policy problem landscape can play a role." If it is rigid, the government may be over-focused on some issues while ignoring other problems. If the landscape is flexible, the government can adapt more quickly to changing circumstances (John, Bertelli, Jennings and Bevan, 2013; p.11). The authors also make a distinction when government's adaptation process is imperfect (the policy agenda is reflective of the punctuated equilibrium expectations); and when good adaptation mirrors characteristics of tactical statecraft – a "government that shifts with the needs and wants of the public, not in big lurches" (2013; p11).

They call this process a *'Focused Adaptation'* – a heuristic that "develops earlier theories of how policy agendas are set and clarifies the micro-foundations of the relationship between decision making of elites and broader social signals very clearly" (Gains, 2014; p.1). In their view, this is a theory of decision-making that "captures how focusing events compel policymakers to rationalise the landscape of policy problems" (2013; p11). This process occurs when policymakers use their discretion to alter the existing agenda based on new information and external events. Subsequently, a change in the value and frequency of designated attention to a particular issue will recontextualise its position on the agenda-continuum. By extension, it will lower or raise its ranking status. *Francesca Gains* suggests that *'Focused Adaptation'* "fits well with the specific institutional features of the British parliamentary state: a relatively well-resourced core executive supported by a permanent bureaucracy; a dominant party system in the legislature and veto power located with a few key actors at the centre of government" (2014; p.1).

This model assumes that agenda-setters operate within an "updating adaptive world" where new information will adjust the course of the decision-making process circumstances (John, Bertelli, Jennings and Bevan, 2013; p.12), which is why they subscribe to the 'attention' element of the *'Punctuated Equilibrium'* model, but not its stability-and-change argument. Although adaptation is not perfect, the assumption is that decision-makers will make the adjustments based on newly acquired knowledge and evidence.

The objective is not to argue whether these are valid reasons to study the agenda-setting of policy priorities. Instead, we aim to present our *'Open-meets-Digital'* findings in juxtaposition with these specifications and offer a refreshed perspective. We are not seeking to devise new theories to fit our research design and untapped *GOV.uk* data. We are confident that the existing agenda literature can be aligned with the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct.

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[45] 'UK Open Government National Action Plan 2011 to 2013' - The UK's first Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan was published at the launch of the OGP in September 2011. It sets out commitments that focus on the OGP grand challenges of improving public services and more effectively managing public resources (last accessed on 11.07.2022: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-open-government-national-action-plan-2011-to-2013).

[46] 'The Cameron–Clegg' coalition was formed after the general election on 6 May. It was the UK's first coalition government since the Churchill caretaker ministry in 1945. The coalition was led by Cameron as Prime Minister with Clegg as Deputy Prime Minister and composed of members of both Cameron's centre-right Conservative Party and Clegg's centrist Liberal Democrats (last accessed on 11.07.2022: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameron%E2%80%93Clegg_coalition).

[47] Exemption criteria for the websites that are not part of GOV.uk (last accessed on 04.08.2017: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2012/12/11/exemptions/).

[48] All departments provide quarterly updates on the number of open websites. The October 2016 report suggests that there were still 269 open government websites. (last accessed on 04.08.2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564729/List_of_central_government_open_websites_-_July_-_Sept_2016_CSV_Format.csv/preview).

# PREAMBLE

# Analytical Chapters

Before we move into the *Analytical Chapters*, it would be helpful to outline what we aim to accomplish in these two chapters as we seek to map out the big picture. Earlier in the text we have explained the untapped *GOV.uk* potential and how we plan to observe its dynamics in the context of an *InfoAttention Marketplace*. Now, we have the opportunity to put the collected-formatted-visualised data to the test and analyse the findings. We are confident that the insights would support our claim that centralised government portals such is *GOV.uk* can provide alternative perspective for the agenda-attention research and bridge a current [digital] divide between theory and applicability of the '*Open-meets-Digital*' construct.

On the one hand, it was always difficult to determine whether an 'official' government's agenda-list existed. If it did, it usually meant that the associated information was not necessarily open for public scrutiny. On the other hand, even when the researchers were able to identify data that can help them identify government priorities or simulate the agenda-attention process, those collections were usually not standardised, updated or available in a reusable digital format – significantly reducing its analytical potential and accuracy while increasing the processing cost. As stated previously, this has all changed with the emergence of the *GOV.uk* platform - a single website for the *UK Government*. As a result, we are now able to engage with government-sanctioned methodology and apply open-digital data to (1) map out policy clusters, and agenda-shapers; (2) materialise an official list of actionable government priorities; (3) determine the frequency of institutional and public agenda-attention within the *GOV.uk* realm; (4) construct a ranking order of actionable government priorities in the context of different agenda-perspectives; and (5) observe (re)prioritisation dynamics along the agenda-attention continuum.

We argue that the *GOV.uk* platform should be observed as an *InfoAttention Marketplace* – a platform where [open] information meets [digital] attention. As such, we are not looking at *GOV.uk* as another resourceful website but as a place where the supply and demand dynamics of the agenda-attention shape the ranking order of actionable government priorities. With such a construct in place, we plan to:

- ***Visualise a UK Policy Platform*** by identifying its agenda-shapers (24+2 Cabinet-level departments) and key policy clusters: (1) 47 policy areas; (2) 219 individual policies; (3) 49 topical events; and (4) 237 worldwide locations which we can observe in the context of a 'data-chamber';

- ***Materialise a list of actionable government priorities*** by using officially sanctioned government typology and data from *GOV.uk*. Rather than generating a combined list,

we have decided to identify and classify actionable items in the context of their respective clusters (policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations). By doing so, we can draft the 'official' agenda list that is reflective of the government's activity while preserving a contextual association with each cluster;

- ***Isolate two key research currencies*** – by designating government's info-flows (supply-output) and public's pageview analytics (demand-input) on *GOV.uk* as our two 'research currencies'; we will be able to define the frequency of the agenda-attention, compute a ranking order of actionable government priorities and make the findings more comparable between different policy clusters and agenda-perspectives;

- ***Observe what happens when the Supply-output of government info-flows*** (institutional policy preferences) ***meets a Demand-input for information*** (public attentiveness to issues) within the *GOV.uk* platform. In the process, we aim to establish macro-benchmarks as we seek to define the ***agenda-attention-market-share*** for the 24+2 departments, policy clusters and individual actionable priorities; *and*

- ***Construct GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum*** as a ranking order of actionable government priorities. By visualising its spectrum as a two-tier platform, we will be able to place the policy clusters along the 'horizontal' line and designate the 'vertical' composition for the ranking order of actionable items in terms of their aggregated agenda-value (number of published info-flows).

Now that we have clearly defined our key elements, parameters and objectives, it is important to address them in an appropriate context and at different stages of our research:

- ***…identify all the actionable government priorities*** in terms of their titles and associations with relevant policy clusters. At that level, the objective was to materialise an 'official' agenda list without assigning a ranking order to observed agenda-shapers, policy clusters or individual actionable items;

- ***…define supply-output and demand-input*** methodology protocols by aligning appropriate *GOV.uk* data-chambers with their respective *InfoAttention* dynamics. The supply of published government info-flows will be used to determine the institutional agenda-attention frequency and calculate the ranking order of actionable government priorities. While the pageviews analytics will be used to define the level of public attentiveness to issues that are communicated on the *GOV.uk* platform and to calculate a ranking order of public agenda priorities; *and*

- *…outline a data standardisation protocol* that will help us make comparable observations between different policy clusters and agenda-perspectives. By observing the ranking order in terms of their Top 25% - Middle 50% - Bottom 25% priority associations, we will be able to compare different actionable items (e.g., policy vs location) in the context of their shared priority status and the agenda-shaper (institutional vs public) and the agenda-perspectives.

Finally, the role of our two analytical chapters will be to *analyse the supply-demand dynamics of the GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* (establish the agenda-attention-market-share) and *to construct the GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum* (structure an aggregated ranking order of actionable government priorities). In the process, we hope that selected data and applied methodology will help us frame the big picture as we define the macro-benchmarks of the supply-demand dynamics and calculate the continuum's aggregated values. In turn, these outputs will help us establish control variables which we can apply when calculating the *agenda-attention-market-share* for policy clusters and individual actionable items while assessing the (re)prioritisation phenomenon of the ranking order along the continuum. However, before we proceed with the analysis of collected data, it helps to clarify how the agenda-setting research can benefit from our adaptive research design and methodology framework.

### *'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share' of Supply and Demand Dynamics*

By using published info-flows and pageview analytics, in *Chapter #04,* we aim to establish the *Supply-output* (government preferences) and *Demand-input* (public attentiveness) for open-digital information on the *GOV.uk* platform. Furthermore, we will try to compute the level of (miss)alignment between the institutional and public agendas as they converge on *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* - we would seek:

- *…to map out the scope and scale of the supply-demand dynamics within the GOV.uk realm*. It is essential to understand the type of government activity (different info-flow categories may signal a different kind of policymaking) and the level of public's interaction with available open-digital information (what are citizens thinking about);

- *…to establish macro-benchmarks which will be used to calculate the agenda-attention-market-share of the policy clusters and individual actionable government priorities.* When analysing data-chambers, it is vital to understand items' perceived importance compared to their respective policy clusters and/or overall *GOV.uk* domain. For example, knowing how many info-flows are associated with the *FCO* can

help us understand the internal dynamics of this department, but in order to calculate its ranking order in the context of the *UK Cabinet* and the overall central government, we need to have macro-benchmarks in place; *and*

- ***…to observe the level of (miss)alignment between the Supply-output (institutional agenda) and Demand-input (public agenda) in terms of aggregated agenda-attention.*** Although we expect to see a divergence between the agendas, on occasions, the agenda-attention supply and demand side may be aligned in terms of their shared priority-value (25-50-25 formula). As such, we could argue that respective data signals could be used as an indicator that a policy window is materialising conditions for the agenda-shaper to instigate a (re)prioritisation of the ranking order along the agenda-attention continuum.

### *'Agenda-Attention Continuum' of Actionable Government Priorities*

In *Chapter 05,* we will visually and contextually structure a ranking order of actionable government priorities that reflects institutional preferences and expressed in the form of aggregated agenda-attention (number of published government info-flows). Although we will be visualising a continuum as a single platform, we will be ranking individual actionable items in the context of their respective policy clusters. In that way, we will preserve their distinct contextual associations while computing each item's priority status separately. Besides, we feel that an agenda-continuum concept is well-suited when presenting an eclectic array of agenda-shapers and policy clusters that reside within the '*Open-meets-Digital'* space. Primary because it shows a conceptual diversity of policy elements while providing a ranking order of their priorities within a single domain that can be easily visualised and communicated. By doing so, we are not just devising a replicable methodology protocol; we are also using the continuum to preserve socio-economic priorities and political norms of a particular time frame for posterity.

Furthermore, we believe that this is one of the first attempts to materialise an 'official' agenda list and establish the priority levels of multiple policy elements using open and digital information from the *GOV.uk* platform. As such, we hope that this will be a valuable contribution to the agenda-setting methodology. It will enable the researchers to reflect on institutional memory while (re)adapting our proposed framework to future changes on the *GOV.uk* platform (from new data-chambers to organisational typology and interface design).

We will only focus on the *Supply*-output dynamics at this stage as we seek to reflect on the institutional agenda-attention frequency when observing actionable government priorities. The chosen direction is partly influenced by our inability to construct a parallel public agenda continuum due to data restrictions (pageview analytics are not easily accessible). However, we will partially address this issue in *Chapter #05* when using smaller data samples. In the meantime, we will plot the spectrum with 24+2 agenda-shapers and four policy clusters (policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations). Once the ranking order of the *agenda-attention continuum* is entirely constructed, we will examine each policy cluster by following a template-style analysis. With such an approach, we will focus on big data's selective elements while making outputs more comparable. As such, we hope to (1) calculate the internal and external perspective of the *agenda-attention-market-share* for each cluster; (2) focus on highest and lowest actionable items within each policy cluster; (3) examine contextual characteristics of the *Top 25%* and *Bottom 25%* of entries; (4) reflect on the 25-50-25 distribution patterns; and (5) determine if the frequency of institutional agenda-attention is responsible for the formation of the 'apex' group of actionable items at the top of the continuum crowning?

While this approach allows us to align the agenda-setting research with the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct, its significance is even more relevant for future research as this was probably the first attempt to use *GOV.uk* open and digital data to identify the official agenda list and rank actionable government priorities using government-sanctioned organisational typology and information. Whether we agree or disagree with how the government presents, classifies and communicates its activity is irrelevant as we are using the available data to translate institutional preferences at the level that was impossible before the launch of the *GOV.uk* platform.

*GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace I:*

**'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share'**
**When Supply-meets-Demand**

## GOV.uk Supply and Demand Dynamics

We begin the first part of this chapter by examining macro agenda-attention patterns shaped by the *Supply-output* of government info-flows and *Demand-input* by the public for government information within the *GOV.uk* realm. Such a perspective will enable us to establish a numerical baseline that we can use as a benchmark when determining the *agenda-attention-market-share* of the actionable government priorities. In turn, we will map out the scope and scale of our *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* as we seek to understand how 24+2 departments, 47 policy areas, 219 individual policies, 49 topical events and 237 worldwide locations are prioritised and ranked along the *Agenda-Attention Continuum*. For example, with our benchmark indicators in place, we would determine which Cabinet-level Department publishes the largest number of info-flows and uses that data to calculate its agenda-attention-market-share within the *24+2 Cabinet* and in relation to other government entities that reside on the *GOV.uk* platform. As such, it would be interesting to see if the Top 25% of actionable government priorities and agenda-shapers will command a more imposing *agenda-attention-market-share* when observed in isolation of their policy cluster and less so when analysed in the context of the overall *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace?* Therefore, our agenda-attention methodology will allow us to highlight which actionable items are more likely to excel in the context of their policy cluster and which ones can dominate the agenda-attention.

If we observe 357 departments, agencies and other public bodies residing on *GOV.uk*, both as the 'publishers' of government information and the 'recipients' of public attention, it is important to establish how supply/demand indicators are redistributed across these entities. On the one hand, we expect that *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*, in terms of published info-flows, will be responsible for a large *agenda-attention-market-share* when compared to other agenda-shapers. On the other hand, we ought to keep an open mind regarding the demand for information, as public attention patterns may not necessarily be aligned with the institutional agenda preferences. To help us define benchmarks, we will have a 3-tier data analysis:

***Establishing a macro Supply-output of government info-flows [Effector]***
To help us devise a baseline benchmark, we will apply two perspectives:
- Compute the overall number of published info-flows on *GOV.uk* between May 2010 and May 2016 to determine the *agenda-attention-market-share* for info-flows based on their primary association (publications – statistics – announcements). This benchmark will help us determine if the government is more proactive in

*coordinative-agenda* (publications) or the ***communicative-agenda*** (announcements) domain, and how the ***statistical input*** is trending along the spectrum;

- Determine how the info-flow *agenda-attention-market-share* is distributed among the ***agenda-shapers*** in the context of two key power-groups: (1) *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* – the apex of the government; and (2) remaining 331 departments, public bodies and agencies residing on *GOV.uk*. Such calculations will help us determine if the agenda is indeed driven by the 'apex' and how those power dynamics are reflected in the context of coordinative, statistical and communicative agendas.

### *Establishing a macro Demand-input for government information [Detector]*

This baseline benchmark will be defined in terms of available *GOV.uk* performance data (March 2014 – May 2016) that records users' behavioural characteristics across the platform – a process that we observe as an expression of public agenda (*what the citizens want to think about*). Even though the number of pageviews will be our primary research currency in subsequent chapters, we have decided to analyse the number of visitors data to form a broader picture of the level of public attentiveness across the platform. As such, our principal objective is to highlight how the *Demand-input* for information is distributed among four key clusters: (1) overall *GOV.uk* platform – includes all pages; (2) *GOV.uk* homepage; (3) landing pages for *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* – presented as a combined figure for all 26 entities; and (4) data relating to landing pages for nine key 'menu' categories. Such categorisation will help us determine how public attention is distributed across the *GOV.uk* system.

### *Observing what happens when the Supply-output meets Demand-input*

This will be our first opportunity to examine how (miss)aligned are the institutional and public agendas in the context of *GOV.uk* supply-demand dynamics. However, due to data-limitations[49] from the demand-side of the equation, we will structure our analysis into two parts: the macro perspective will allow us to compare the two agendas in terms of their annual output/input dynamics using March 2014 – May 2016 data-sets. At this level, we are using aggregated data (all policy clusters and pageviews) to determine if two agendas show alignment characteristics within the same year. At the same time, the micro perspective will help us examine (miss)alignment dynamics within the policy clusters and in the context of 2015[50] data. As we cannot equate the value of one 'info-flow' with a corresponding value of a 'single pageview', we will identify the alignment factor in terms of their shared 25-50-25 priority associations (if an actionable item resides within the same priority domain, the two agendas are aligned) - such pattern may indicate a formation of a policy window.

## [EFFECTOR] Institutional Agenda: Supply of Info-Flows to GOV.uk

We begin our macro assessment by measuring the aggregated effect of the info-flow supply across *GOV.uk* in the context of our entire research time-frame and concerning all government entities, policy areas, locations and info-flow types. In the process, we will apply four-levels of analysis in order to: (1) establish how info-flows are distributed in the context of their topical associations (publications – announcements - statistics); (2) determine the agenda dynamics between *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* and 331 other government entities that reside on *GOV.uk* – which group dominates the *agenda-attention-market-share*; (3) analyse how the *Supply-output* is distributed along our time-continuum – measuring growth progress and indicating annual percentage change, and (4) highlight redistribution characteristics which may emerge when we observe the *Supply-output* in terms of info-flow characteristics – which type or format of published content is commanding the attention?

We hope that this approach will provide us with:

- …a macro insight into the supply side of the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace*;
- …a baseline for our computational analysis in subsequent chapters;
- …an insight into agenda dynamics between different entities – how is policy capital redistributed among the agenda-setters; *and*
- …a three-tier agenda-perspective of the *Supply-output*, from **aggregated** (all published info-flows) to **coordinative** (publications) and **communicative** (announcements).

This six-digit figure defines our starting point: **128,898** – a combined number of published info-flows between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016, by 357 central government entities residing on GOV.uk the time (see figure 4-1). These outputs consider all publishers, policy areas, policies, locations and 25 info-flow types. If observed in isolation, this figure alone does not tell us much about institutional agenda-attention. After, all it is impossible to argue that the combined total is too high or too low, as there are no comparable standards that can indicate how many info-flows a government is expected to publish at any given time. The figure is undoubtedly not dismissive, but if we consider that the observed period is 73-months long and that we are dealing with 357 entities, simple averaging suggests that government publishes around 1,766 info-flows per calendar month and that each entity could be responsible for 361 info-flows. In those terms, numbers do not necessarily look notable, as we cannot expect such evenly spread agenda-attention across time, topical issues or the institutional entities. Our four-level analysis approach will help us contextualise the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace's* supply-output on a macro level.

**Level-1 Analysis:** *to determine the Supply-output characteristics in terms of its contextual associations (Publications - Announcements - Statistics)*

Even though we are treating each info-flow equally in terms of its observed agenda-attention value, it is important to note that *GOV.uk* uses 25 different classifications when defining info-flow format or content. Furthermore, info-flow types are clustered under the umbrella of one of the three collections: *Publications*, *Announcements* and *Statistics* - which provides an additional agenda analysis level. Therefore, a single info-flow is not just a unit that helps us define the government's *Supply-output*; it is also a multifaceted signal which can help us decode the agenda-attention dynamics across the *UK Policy Platform*. As such, we could say that a single info-flow contains five important indicators:

1. **agenda-attention value** *(in the context of our methodology 1 info-flow = 1 observational unit of the agenda-attention)*;

2. **agenda-frequency** *(when it was published)*;

3. **information type/format** (there are 25 different info-flows) and **contextual association with a collection** *(publications – statistics – announcements)*;

4. **the actual content** (text/visual/data) and a **digital-log** indicating when the content was updated or edited *(which will not be the focus of our study); and*

5. **interconnected factor** – who is the original publisher and which departments, policy areas, individual policies, topical events and locations are associated with its content.

Therefore, if the '*medium is the message*,' we can observe the agenda-attention in terms of frequency (*when the info-flows are published*), volume (*how many info-flows are published and remain active on GOV.uk*) and contextual association (*how many info-flows are associated with each collection*). The latter categorisation is very useful in terms of our ability to contextualise the *UK Policy Platform* in terms of three distinct agenda-perspectives:

- *Publications* are the most extensive collection with 18 different info-flow types. As such, its content tends to reflect the government's ***coordinative-agenda*** through policy formulation, guidance, regulation, consultation, reporting and transparency;

- *Announcements* collection with its six info-flow types reflects the government's ***communicative-agenda*** and its directive to mainstream policy, manage public campaigns and inform citizens about government's activity, services and events;

- *Statistics* collection (single info-flow) is a ***data-driven agenda***, as its volume and frequency are very much dependent on the department's organisational capacity to unlock its data-silos. Some departments may produce more data than others, while the cyclical nature of available data may condition the output.

Even though the info-flows are equal when it comes to our 'unit-of-observation'; we seek to understand if a supply (volume/frequency) of open and digitised information can help us decoded whether a government is in the business of **coordinating** (publications), **decoding** (statistics) or **communicating** policy (announcements)?

To help us determine how those info-flows are redistributed in terms of their collections and association with the agenda-setters, we have constructed a schematic highlighting relevant outputs (see figure 4-1). The objective of the tabular diagram is to break down the *agenda-attention-market-share* of the *Supply-output* into three key segments: (1) how many info-flows are associated with *Publications, Announcements* and *Statistics* collection; (2) how are info-flows distributed along the 2010-2016 time continuum (aggregated annual output); and



**122,898**

A total number of published info-flows (IFs) by all government entities (n357) residing within GOV.uk between 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016

| **59,880** | **53,810** | **9,208** |
|---|---|---|
| PUBLICATIONS info-flows | ANNOUNCEMENTS info-flows | STATISTICS info-flows |
| 48.72% | 43.78% | 7.49% |

Annual distribution of combined info-flows

| 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | **2014** | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8,576** | **16,038** | **17,277** | **20,679** | **26,642** | **25,085** | **8,601** |
| 6.97% | 13.04% | 14.05% | 16.82% | 21.67% | 20.41% | 7.00% |

info-flows by **24+2 Departments**

**94,651**

77.02 %

AGENDA-ATTENTION-MARKET-SHARE:

info-flows by **331 Gov. entities**

**28,247**

22.97%

AGENDA-ATTENTION-MARKET-SHARE:

| Collection % | Overall % | No. of IFs | | No. of IFs | Overall % | Collection % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 43.74% | 33.69% | **41,405** | PUBLICATIONS | **18,475** | 15.03% | 65.40% |
| 50.75% | 39.09% | **48,041** | ANNOUNCEMENTS | **5,769** | 4.69% | 20.42% |
| 5.49% | 4.23% | **5,205** | STATISTICS | **4,003** | 3.25% | 14.17% |

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations (the largest number of published info-flows and the 'agenda-attention-market-share' percentage)

**Figure 4-1:** GOV.uk Supply-output: Contextual distribution of published info-flows and their 'agenda-attention-market-share' [10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016]. Source: www.GOV.uk *(publications, announcements and statistics)*

(3) how are info-flows attached to the agenda-setters, both in terms of their aggregated output and contextual association (*24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* – the government's apex vs the remaining 331 government entities residing on the *GOV.uk* platform)? Also, by colour coding the highest-value figures in red (numbers and fields), we can visually isolate the elements with the largest *agenda-attention-market-share* within the system.

As stated previously, 357 government entities were responsible for publishing **128,898** info-flows between May 2010 and May 2016. Furthermore, as we observe this figure in terms of its redistributive effect, it becomes evident that most of the info-flows are associated with the coordinative-agenda, as 48.72% of the *Supply-output* resides within the *Publications* domain. While the Announcements' communicative aspect is responsible for 43.78% and *Statistics* for 7.49% of the *agenda-attention-market-share*, such distribution indicates that 92.50% of published info-flows (n113,690) are responsible for shaping coordinative and communicative agenda of the actionable government priorities. Even though these figures suggest a stronger emphasis on policy formulation and guidance, the 5% difference is not significant enough to keep the Announcements' communicative nature at a permanent second place. If we observe these dynamics on a monthly or daily basis, the communicative nature of the agenda-attention would likely have taken precedence over the coordinative policymaking, both in terms of volume and frequency.

On the other hand, some may argue that such substantial communicative numbers (n53,810) are a direct result of how the government is adapting to technological/societal changes – as demand for digital and open information is rebalancing a traditional role of an agenda-shaper, from a policymaker to a policy communicator. As for statistics collection, one anticipates sustainable growth in this domain as more data-sets are being released by the departments at regular intervals. However, these info-flows can tell us more about the organisational (in)ability to produce and release data-sets; than the strategic agenda-attention level. Although, one could argue that the timing of releasing statistics is more telling than their volume, as politically sensitive data can have a more significant impact on the agenda if their release is strategically repositioned within the policy platform.

**Level-2 Analysis:** *to establish agenda dynamics among the government entities that reside on GOV.uk – which group is responsible for most of the published info-flows?*

Even though 357 government entities reside on *GOV.uk*, we focus only on *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* – the UK Government's apex. If we consider their role in setting/implementing the agenda, we expect that those 26 entities are responsible for a substantial *agenda-attention-market-share* of the info-flows (see figure 4-1). However, the departments' power dynamics are very complex, and it is challenging to establish a ranking system that can reflect the actual state of affairs. Significantly as those perceptions can quickly change depending on how we define the level of [perceived] importance when it comes to departmental hierarchy. In the past, researchers would try to establish the ranking continuum using contextual and political analysis that is based on the department's mandate, type of activities and political capital of the individual ministers, or by focusing on the department's annual budget and size of the workforce. Today, thanks to *GOV.uk*, we can also use *Open-meets-Digital* construct when ranking and comparing government entities based on volume, frequency and type of published info-flows. We are confident that this approach will help us present a much more accurate picture of how institutional agenda-shapers are positioned along the continuum.

The results are incredibly revealing. We now know that *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* - which account for only 7.28% of government entities on *GOV.uk* - are responsible for 77% of the published info-flows. In comparison, the remaining 92% of government entities (n331) are only responsible for 23% of the overall *Supply-output*. Although anticipated, the redistribution of the *agenda-attention-market-share* between these two groups is rather striking. Furthermore, these figures reinforce our arguments that *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* are the key agenda-shapers and, as such, are worthy of our immediate attention. On a macro level, we already know that the *Publications* lead the output with 48.72% of all published info-flows (n59,880); but if we look at *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments,* those dynamics are reversed. In the context of their internal *agenda-attention-market-share*, the Announcements cluster leads the way with 50.75% of the info-flows (n48,041), while the *Publications* account for 43.74% of output (n41,405).

Although these patterns suggest that the *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* appear to be more proactive in the communicative-agenda domain, they also suggest that the two groups display distinctly different agenda patterns - not just in terms of volume of published info-flows, but also by the level of their contextual association with *Publications, Statistics* and *Announcements*. When observed as a cluster, it is clear that the remaining 331 entities have a strong preference for Publications' coordinative nature as those info-flows are responsible for

65.40% of their overall output compared to 20.42% of info-flows that are associated with the *Announcements* collection. However, the actual misalignment can be observed when comparing the disparity between *Publications* and *Announcements* within each group. In terms of the 331 entities, that disparity is set at confounding 45%, while the apex group displays a relatively smaller *(7%)* gap. Whereas *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* may be engaged in balancing act between policy formulation and communication, the remaining 92% of government entities appear to be focused on the coordinative nature of the agenda process. When it comes to *Statistics*, although the *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* lead in terms of volume (n5,205 vs n4,003), data-sets account for a higher *agenda-attention-market-share* within the 331 entities group (14.17%) in comparison to the apex cluster (5.49%).

**Level-3 Analysis:** *to observe the annual percentage change of info-flow distribution along the time-continuum in the context of their aggregated output and contextual association with Publications, Announcements and Statistics*

Before we proceed, it is essential to remind ourselves that the two annual samples: 2010 (starts from 10th of May) and 2016 (ends on 10th of May) are not observed in the context of a full calendar year. As such, their figures, although accurate, are not entirely reflective of the entire annual supply-cycle. Therefore, when observing info-flow punctuations along the time-continuum, it is advisable to focus on the 2011-2015 period for more reflective analysis. As the scope and scale of *GOV.uk* activities increase with each day, we would assume that from May 2010, a combined info-flow *Supply-output* will show an upward trend of sustainable growth across all subsequent years in our time frame (see figure 4-2). To help us determine whether that is the case, we will first observe aggregated info-flow output in terms of an annual percentage change[51] using our whole calendar-year time samples as displayed in this table:

| Time-Sample | Percentage Change | Aggregated No. of info-flows |
|---|---|---|
| **2011 – 2012** | increase of +**7.73%** | (n16,038 - n17,277) |
| **2012 – 2013** | increase of +**19.69%** | (n17,277 - n20,679) |
| **2013 – 2014** | **increase of +28.42%** | **(n20,679 - n26,642)** |
| **2014 - 2015** | decrease of -**5.84%** | (n26,642 - n25,085) |
| **2011 - 2015** | increase of +**56.41%** | (**n16,038 - n25,085**) |

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations

**Figure 4-2:** GOV.uk Supply-output 2011-2015: Annual percentage change for aggregated info-flows (*all categories*). Source: www.GOV.uk (*aggregated number of info-flows*)

As such, calculations and patterns in Figure 4-2 allow us to make the following observations:

- we can detect a gradual increase across 2011 (n16,038), 2012 (n17,277), and 2013 (n20,679) samples until the trend reaches its peak in 2014 with 26,642 published info-flows - accounting for 21.67% of the overall *Supply-output* across the platform;

- although annual percentage changes were more incremental; in terms of a broader expansion, we could detect an overall increase of 56.41% between 2011 and 2015;

- while the most significant annual increase of 28.42% was between 2013 and 2014; the smallest was between 2011 and 2012 (7.73%); *and*

- a decrease of 5.84% between 2014 (peak-year) and 2015 suggests that the *Supply-output* of government information may not be as sustainable as initially anticipated – it appears to be susceptible, both to positive and negative annual punctuations.

The overall patterns do highlight one interesting deviation. On the one hand, the 2014 year has had the largest number of published info-flows (n26,642) – suggesting a sustainable upward trajectory. On the other hand, a percentage change between 2014 and 2015 indicates an actual decrease of 5.85% in *Supply-output* – 1,557 fewer info-flows were published in 2015. Such mixed signals suggest that the *Supply-output* may be stabilising in terms of high punctuations as *GOV.uk* is no longer a novelty and because most of the backdated info-flows have been uploaded into the system. However, if we consider the scheduled *National Elections* on 7 May 2015, one expects the government to use the 2014-15 period to amplify its coordinative and communicative activity. While our methodology allows us to observe conditions from a macro perspective, we will not analyse why this may not be the case. However, in future research, it is highly advisable to monitor supply punctuations in real-time as sudden changes in volume and frequency could serve as potent indicators for the agenda-attention changes. As such, it is helpful to reflect on the annual percentage change in the context of our three collections.

In terms of the annual percentage change, we find that each collection has distinct patterns (see figure 4-3). On the one hand, the *Statistics* have exhibited sustainable and uninterrupted supply of info-flows between 2011 to 2015 (no drop in volume); whilst *Publications* were able to keep up with that trend only up to 2014-2015 period when we can record a decrease of 12.69% in their overall *Supply-output* (which is reflective of the aggregated patterns for the same time-sample). On the other hand, the *Announcements* have exhibited a constant fluctuation between positive and negative percentage change. Not only that we could detect

two instances of reduced output (-10.03% in 2012-13; and -7.41% in 2014-15), but we could also observe that annual percentage change for the *Announcements* is significantly lower when compared to the other two collections. For example, while the highest annual increase for the *Announcements* is 12.91% (2013-14), it stands at 56.32% (2012-13) for the *Publications* and an impressive 93.26% (2013-14) for the *Statistics*. If we compare these results with our aggregated figures, we are reminded that the highest percentage change in output was in 2013-2014, which is reflected in the *Announcements* and *Statistics* - which also happen to be their highest output value within the observed sample. However, the aggregated pattern is not reflective in the *Publications'* domain as its highest value was achieved in the 2012-13 period (56.32%), while a lower percentage change of 34.27% was recorded in the 2013-14 period, which suggests that 2013 was more significant in terms of the coordinative-agenda. At this stage, it is challenging to determine whether this is due to more proactive policymaking or whether it is related to the migration of backdated content or a mix of both scenarios?

| Time-Samples | Publications | Announcements | Statistics |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2011 – 2012** | **15.66%**<br>(n6,150 – n7,113) | **0.24%**<br>(n9,333 – n9,355) | **45.77%**<br>(n555 – n809) |
| **2012 – 2013** | **56.32%**<br>(n7,113 – n11,119) | **-10.03%**<br>(n9,335 – n8,417) | **41.29%**<br>(n809 – n1,143) |
| **2013 – 2014** | **34.27%**<br>(n11,119 – n14,929) | **12.91%**<br>(n8,417 – n9,504) | **93.26%**<br>(n1,143 – n2,209) |
| **2014 - 2015** | **-12.69%**<br>(n14,929 – n13,034) | **-7.41%**<br>(n9,504 – n8,800) | **47.14%**<br>(n2,209 – n3,251) |

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations

**Figure 4-3:** GOV.uk Supply-output 2011-2015: Annual percentage change for Publications, Announcements and Statistics (*info-flows*). Source: www.GOV.uk

There may be numerous reasons for such patterns, and it will be difficult to isolate a single indicator that may have such pervasive power to influence the level of *Supply-output*. Nevertheless, we can highlight some of the patterns that could account for such changes:

- ***Publications'*** info-flows tend to be more planned and cyclical in their nature as reporting, policymaking, consultations, guidance, and regulation requires more planning (except for FOI releases which are reactive to demands). The Publications' collection is also associated with 18 different types/formats of info-flows, making it the largest of three by default. It is not surprising that this collection commands both the highest output and more sustainable annual percentage change.

- ***Announcements*** with their six info-flow types, on the other hand, are much more reactive in their nature as their directive to inform the public, communicate government's activity and amplify the policy is not guided so much by timetables as it is by the external events and (un)planned changes in policymaking. On the one hand, the collection may be more prone to fluctuated (positive and negative) annual percentage change due to its protocols' reactive nature. On the other hand, a relatively low annual change factor suggests that their info-flow output is more stable than the other two collections. For example, the maximum difference between two annual samples for the *Announcements* was 1,087 compared to *Publications,* which stands at 4,006 info-flows.

- ***In sharp contrast to the other two collections, statistics*** display a much more stable output trajectory (uninterrupted growth). Such a pattern may reflect organisational changes behind the scene, as more departments embrace the *Open-meets-Digital* protocols by releasing data at regular intervals. However, the extreme percentage change of 93.26% for the 2013-2014 sample could be attributed to the upload of backdated data, as we see a return in 2014-2015 to the *Supply-output* that is reflective of the first two time samples.

**Level-4 Analysis:** *to detect how the Supply-output is redistributed along the time-continuum in the context of our three collections and 25 different info-flow types*

To help us observe the info-flow frequency in terms of their annual redistribution and contextual association, we have designed a visualisation to help us with our analysis (see figure 4-4). As we know from our previous results, the peak year for the aggregated *Supply-output* was in 2014 with a total of 26,642 info-flows; but now we can also see that *Publications* (n14,929) and the *Announcements* (n9,504) share 2014 as their 'peak-year'; while the *Statistics* (n3,251) have reached their highest value a year later. Furthermore, it is interesting to observe that in terms of output, the *Announcements* were leading for the first three consecutive years (2010, 2011 and 2012), until the *Publications* takeover in 2013, which they have maintained throughout the 2014-16 timeframe. While the average annual difference between the *Publications* and the *Announcements* is around 3,254 info-flows, the smallest gap for the entire calendar year was 2012 (n2,242) favouring the *Announcements*, and the largest was in 2014 with 5,425 extra more info-flows in favour of the *Publications*. While the *Statistics* started with relatively low output in 2010 with 237 info-flows, unlike their counterparts, they have
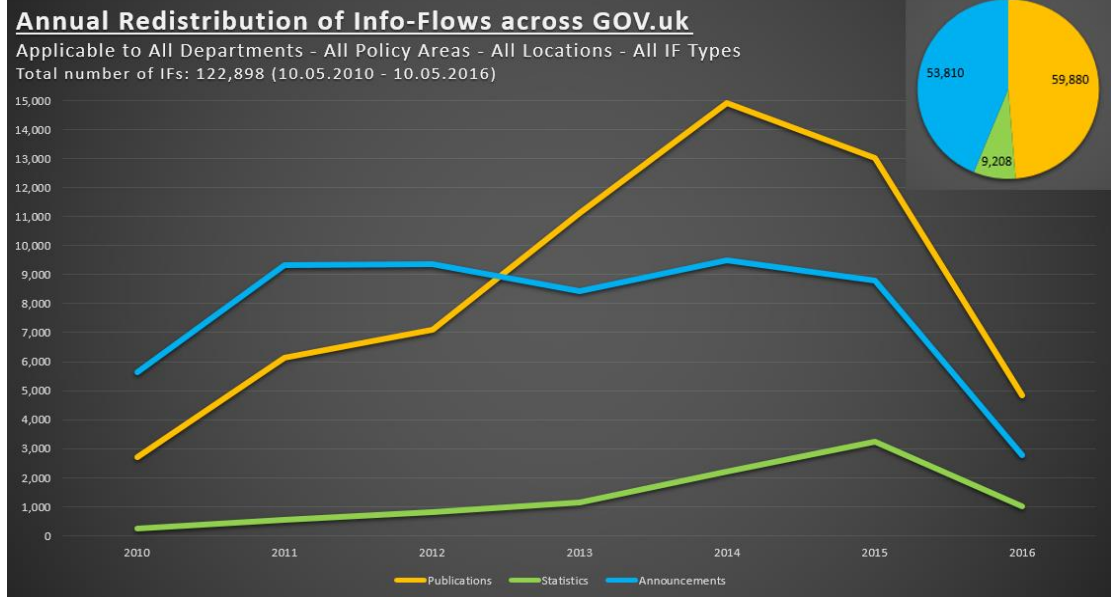
*Legend*: Yellow-line (Publications – Green-line (Statistics) – Blue-line (Announcements)

## Annual redistribution of info-flows (n122,898)

| Info-Flow Collection | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Publications** | **2,704** | **6,150** | **7,113** | **11,119** | **14,929** | **13,034** | **4,831** |
| **Announcements** | **5,635** | **9,333** | **9,355** | **8,417** | **9,504** | **8,800** | **2,766** |
| **Statistics** | **237** | **555** | **809** | **1,143** | **2,209** | **3,251** | **1,004** |
| Total by Year: | 8,576 | 16,038 | 17,277 | 20,679 | 26,642 | 25,085 | 8,601 |

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations
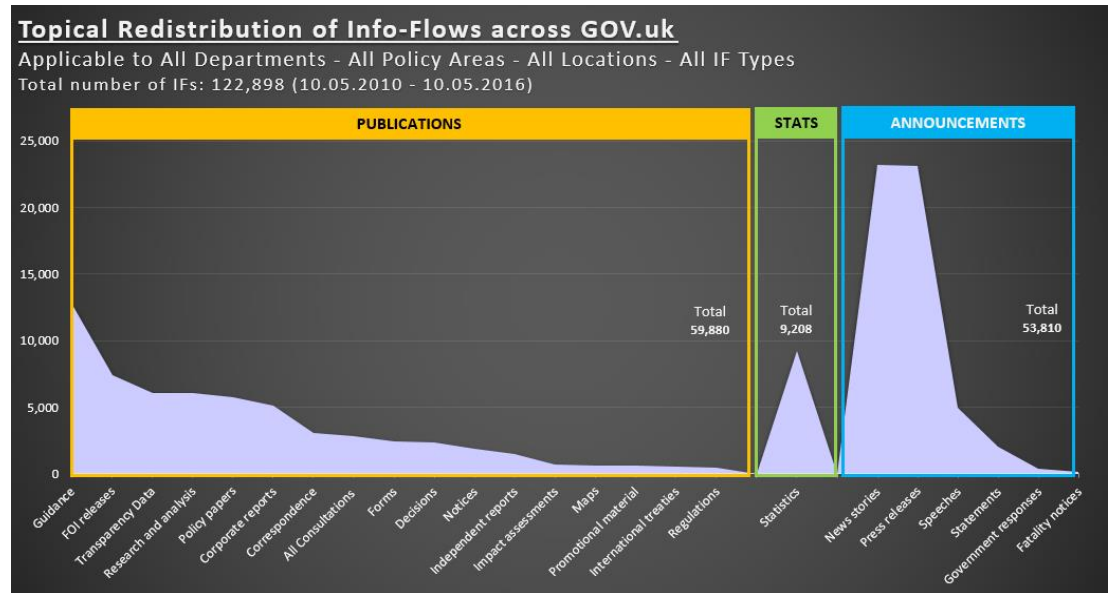


**Figure 4-4:** GOV.uk Supply-output (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016): Annual and Topical redistribution of info-flows concerning all departments, policy areas, locations and info-flow types. Source: www.GOV.uk

exhibited sustainable upward growth (with a most significant increase between 2013 and 2014) and reached its peak in 2015 (n3,251).

Even though we are not grading info-flows by their level of perceived agenda-value, it is helpful to reflect on output redistribution in terms of individual info-flow types. As we have previously stated, info-flow types are not equally distributed across the three collections. *Publications* lead the way with 18 different types, while the *Announcements* have six and *Statistics*, well just one type/format – the statistics itself. Such organisational typology suggests that the coordinative aspect of the agenda-attention is much more diverse, both in terms of its volume and type of supplied government information. Therefore, some may argue that *Publications*, by virtue of their diversity, will always account for the most significant number of published info-flows, and by extension, will emphasise the role of the coordinative agenda in policymaking. To help us analyse these characteristics, we have visualised a redistribution of info-flows through a line-graph and a clustered column (see figure 4-5). We ought to note that exclusion of *Statistics* from this visualisation was intentional, as that collection contains only one info-flow type, and as such, we would only be repeating our observations from the *Level-3 Analysis*. Before we look at the *Publications* in greater detail, it is essential to note that in addition to being associated with 18 different info-flow types, the collection is also sub-organised into five topical clusters – providing an additional layer of the agenda contextualisation for the individual info-flows (see figure 4-4 / 4-5). They are classified as (1) ***Consultations*** – represented by two info-flow types; (2) ***Corporate*** with three; (3) ***Policy & Guidance*** with five; (4) ***Research & Analysis*** with only one; and (5) ***Other*** with seven different info-flow types. As expected, neither the volume of the *Supply-output* nor the number of types is equally distributed across these clusters.

If we look at the *Other* category, we can see that it is in fourth place in terms of the *Supply-output* (14.62%), even though it contains seven different info-flow types. As such, we can see that the most diverse cluster is not necessarily the one with the highest *Supply-output* - diversity is not correlated with volume. Especially as we can identify individual info-flow types, who have a higher output than the entire clusters. Equally, we can calculate that two categories, *Corporate* (n18,600) and *Policy & Guidance* (n23,651), are responsible for 70.51% of the overall output within the *Publications* collection, which means that eight info-flow types are responsible for more than two-thirds of the *Supply-output* within the collection. This suggests that the coordinative nature of the agenda-attention is concentrated on policy formulation, guidance, impact assessment, correspondence, reporting and transparency.

## PUBLICATIONS info-flow categories (share of published output – n59,880)

| Consultations | Corporate | Policy & Guidance | Other | Research & Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.67%** (n2) | **31.04%** (n3) | **39.47%** (n5) | **14.62%** (n7) | **10.10%** (n1) |
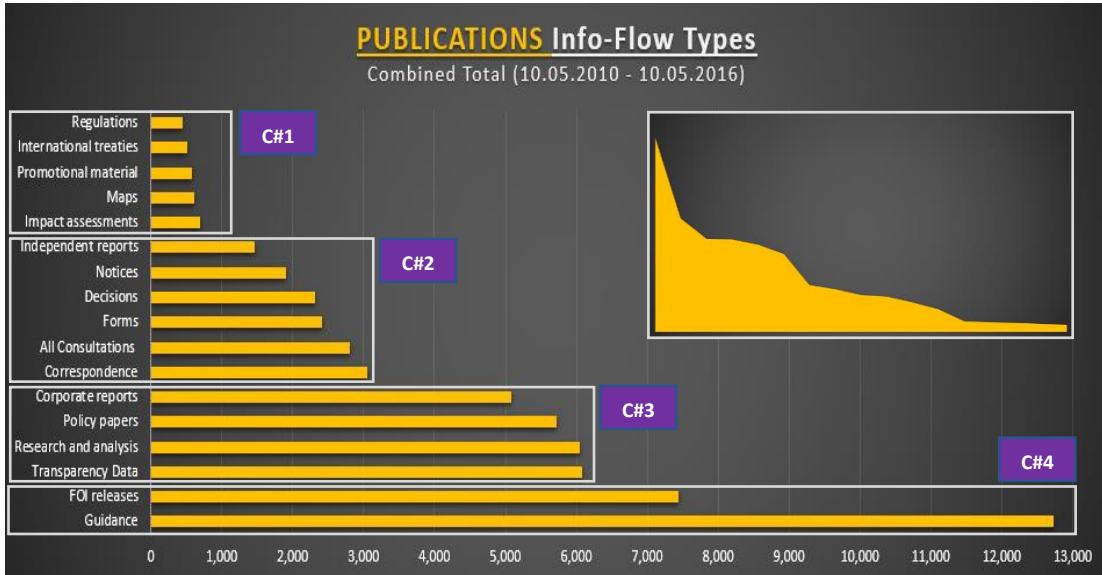


## ANNOUNCEMENTS info-flow Types (share of published output – n53,810)

| Fatality notices | Gov. response | News stories | Press releases | Speeches | Statements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0.28%** | **0.75%** | **43.07%** | **42.91%** | **9.14%** | **3.82%** |
| | | **85.98%** | | | |
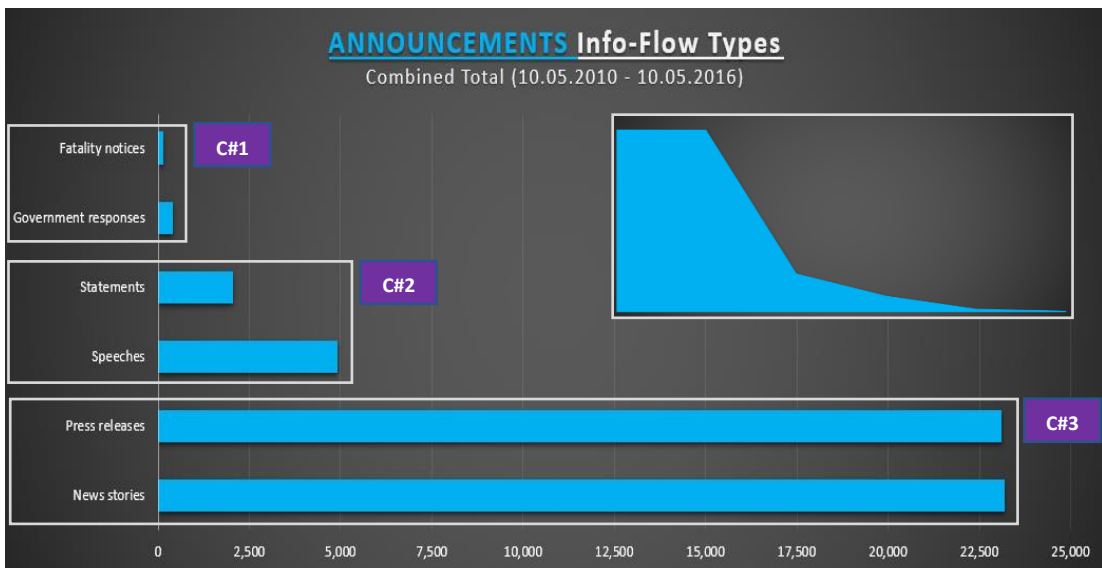


*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations

**Figure 4-5:** GOV.uk Supply-output (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016): Contextual redistribution of info-flows concerning Publications and Announcements categories. Source: www.GOV.uk

The above observations were made from the 'clustered' perspective, but when we look at the visualised data, we immediately notice that the *Publications* exhibit the 'long-tail' distribution characteristics. Whereby two top-ranking info-flow types (see figure 4-5 C#4 frame), *Guidance* (n12,728) and *FOI release* (n7,431), are forming a so-called 'fat-head' peak as they occupy 33.65% of the overall *Supply-output* within the *Publications* domain. Besides, it is the *Guidance* with is 21.21% *agenda-attention-market-share* that appears to be the most significant info-flow type in this constellation by volume. In addition to securing a prominent top place on the continuum, the gap between the *Guidance* and the second-in-line *FOI release* is rather striking – a difference of 5,297 info-flows. As such, we could say that the *Guidance* is much more reflective of the coordinative nature of the agenda process, while the *FOI release* is a reactive response by the government to the publics' request for information. So, if we analyse the top five info-flow types in the *Publications* domain (collectively responsible for 63.40% of output), we can detect a formation of two distinct features of the coordinative-agenda:

1. **POLICY:** When combined, the *Guidance* (at the top spot with 12,728 info-flows), *Research and analysis* (at the fourth spot with n6,052) and *Policy papers* (at the fifth spot with 5,713 info-flows) are responsible for 40.85% of the output within the *Publications'* collection – reinforcing the role of the coordinative-agenda in the policymaking process.

2. **OPEN:** *FOI releases* at the second spot with 7,431 and *Transparency data* on the third place with 6,081 info-flows indicate that 22.55% of the government's agenda-attention within the *Publications* domain is dedicated to transparency related protocols. However, even though both types of content demonstrate how *Open Government* may work in practice, it is essential to make a distinction between their supply-demand dynamics and clarify that *Transparency data* relates to the department's budget, reporting, procurement protocols, ministerial meetings and salaries, while the *Statistics* are about capturing and measuring a variety of the socio-economic indicators. On the one hand, the volume of FOI release cannot be planned or predicted, and they depend on the number of public requests and the number of government responses (only those approved are published on *GOV.uk*). On the other hand, the *Transparency data* reflects both the government's organisational capacity and willingness to institutionalise the transparency protocols by releasing information voluntarily and in regular intervals without a prior request. Although they strengthen the *Open-meets-Digital* construct, their role, mandate and practice are distinctly different (reactive vs proactive). However, the numbers suggest that the

*Open Government* is still a work in progress as *FOI requests* are high on the agenda. As we move away from the apex, we can observe that even though the remaining 16 info-flow types are responsible for 66.35% of the *Publications' Supply-output*, that does not mean that they are equally distributed – as highlighted by our C#1, C#2 and C#3 frames on the line-graph (see figure 4-5). As we move away from the 'fat-head', we come across the 'chunky-middle' containing four different info-flow types and is responsible for 38.29% of the collection's *Supply-output*. Contextually they are divided into two halves; the first two are directly associated with policy formulation and research; while the remaining two are about corporate reporting and transparency of governments' activity, which leaves us with the remaining 12 info-flow types whose redistribution characteristics resemble the 'long-tail'. Even though they contain the most significant number of individual types (66.66%), their combined *agenda-attention-market-share* is only 28.06% - with *Correspondence* at the top with 3,052 info-flows and surprisingly *Regulations* (n447) at the end of the continuum with just 0.74% of the *agenda-attention-market-share* of the *Supply-output*.

Also, our visualisation highlights the ambiguity of one crucial element – that of *FOI release* info-flow. If we start from the premise that the *Freedom of Information Request* (FOI) is based on the public demand for government information that was not readily available in the open domain, one could argue that *FOI release* resides both within the supply and a demand side of our *InfoAttention Marketplace*. In that context, if we subtract the number of *FOI releases* from the overall *Publications* volume, we will get a total of 52,449 info-flows - a reduction of 12.40%. With that act alone, the balance between coordinative and communicative agenda-attention has shifted to the advantage of the *Announcements* collection – providing a clear lead of 1,361 info-flows.  However, in practice, such recalibration would not work, as we still need to assign the *FOI release* to a specific category or split the number between the demand and supply side of the equation (a request still requires a government response which is a form of a *Supply-output*). As we are committed to observing *GOV.uk* dynamics within their original and officially sanctioned framework, we will refrain from such intervention, but it is worth keeping in mind how officially sanctioned methodologies can shape our agenda perceptions.

Nevertheless, it was essential to highlight how the government's organisational typology can affect our agenda perceptions and how important it is to contextualise aggregated figures not easily influenced by their preliminary results. Such complexity only shows that the balancing act between shaping and communicating policy is not that clearly defined. We could say that the government is more proactive in the communicative domain at this stage, which is not the

case if we look at the exact figures from the aggregated perspective. Also, it can be argued that, even though *FOI* is in place, the government is not always required to provide the requested information. This means that published FOI releases are part of the government's overall agenda – which information to publish and which one to keep as classified is a manifestation of how the *Open Government* policy is put in practice. Also, it is an example of how the agenda-control is expressed within the policy domain - if specific information is made public, could it become a feedback signal that could re-activate (un)wanted) a reprioritisation of the ranking order along the *agenda-attention continuum*? In that context, even though this info-flow type depends on the *Demand-input* of the public agenda, its outcome is controlled by the *Supply-output* dynamics of the institutional preferences.

In contrast, with their six info-flow types, the Announcements tend to exhibit characteristics of a 'short-tail' or a 'fat-head' distribution - whereby 85.98% of the info-flow outputs are published either in the form of *News stories* (n23,181) or *Press releases* (n23,091). On the one hand, such unequal distribution suggests a strong emphasis on the government's direct and strategic communication. On the other hand, it exposes a balancing act between the traditional form of communication (issuing a press release – 42.91%) and strategic form of policy amplification through government storytelling (news stories – 43.07%).  While these two types monopolise the *Announcements* domain, we cannot ignore a triptych cluster of *Speeches* (n4,921), *Statements* (n2,058) and *Government responses* (n408) with a combined output of 13.71%. Especially as they symbolise policymaking's political nature whereby ministers proceed to shape/maintain the agenda by giving speeches, clarifying government's positions, and defending or rationalising their policy choices.

While at the end of the continuum, far away from the government's public relations matrix, we find 151 *Fatality notices* representing 0.28% of the collections' *Supply-output*. Although it is the smallest info-flow type in terms of volume across the system, it is nevertheless the most sensitive of all, as it highlights the complexity of attaching an agenda-value to our info-flows. On the one hand, we should be pleased that these numbers are low, suggesting lower military/civilian casualties. On the other hand, the content of *Fatality notice* can unlock two valuable insights: (1) capacity to observe the *UK* involvement in international security, emergency operations and military engagement as a form of the agenda-attention for specific locations or issue (e.g. modern-age piracy off the coast of *Somalia*); and (2) ability to align ethical norms with methodology protocol when attempting to assign the agenda-value to the content that conveys a message about lost *British* lives? This example emphasises the complexity of attaching agenda-value to an info-flow based solely on its categorisation; hence,

why our approach to observing an info-flow as a single-attention-unit (volume and frequency) may prove to be a more reflective, less biased, and much more resilient method when decoding the frequency of government's agenda.

On this note, we conclude our macro-observations of the *Effector* - the government *Supply-output* of info-flows across the *GOV.uk* platform. Now that we understand how macro patterns are redistributed along time and contextual continuum, we can apply our newly defined benchmarks in subsequent chapters and proceed with the Demand-input macro analysis. In the process, we hope to establish the public agenda in the form of digital attention (what citizens want to think about) and test how aligned institutional preferences and public attentiveness are within the *GOV.uk* platform.

## [DETECTOR] Public Agenda: Demand for Info-Flows on GOV.uk

Now that we have a better understanding of the *Supply-output* dynamics, we can proceed with our objective to compute a macro *Demand-input* for government information on *GOV.uk* by using two web-traffic variables: (1) number of unique visitors[52]; and (2) number of pageviews[53]. At first, such a narrow focus may seem inadequate, especially as we know that the *GDS* team can record a wide array of user's behavioural characteristics during their engagement with *GOV.uk* content. However, the rationale behind our position is conditioned, both by digital constraints and contextual relevance:

***Open-meets-Digital constraints***: although the *GDS* team can record and preserve much web-traffic analytics in a digital format, that information is not necessarily open to the public. On the one hand, the *GDS* could argue that making this massive data-set accessible in a user-friendly manner is neither their priority nor a justifiable cost. On the other hand, we wonder if there is an actual need for such transparency – indeed, the *British* public is more interested in having access to the latest policy research than real-time web-traffic data for the *Cabinet Office*? However, this is not an attempt to diminish the value of web analytics; on the contrary, we believe that such information can be beneficial when decoding the public agenda (*what they want to think about when searching GOV.uk*).

It would be fair to say that not many people are interested in *GOV.uk* analytics data – except for selected civil servants, GovTech developers, academic researchers, CivicTech activists, and few journalists. Hence, why the *GDS* team has decided to (re)address this issue by launching a *GOV.uk Performance Dashboard*[54] in mid-October 2012 (a week after the official launch of *GOV.uk*). By capturing, channelling and communicating selective[55] *GOV.uk performance* in real-time, the *GDS* was keen to promote a holistic approach to government transparency while using feedback data to make online engagement simpler, clearer and faster for users – as stated in their blog post[56]:

> *"Knowing that there were 1.1 million visits to GOV.uk on 17th October [2012], each one lasting on average 2 mins 46 seconds, is interesting in itself, but that is not enough to tell us whether this is a good level of performance. More importantly, if there are areas where we can improve, what should our product team do to make it better?"* (23.10.2012)

The basic premise of this *Open-meets-Digital* domain is to allow the public to observe the government's [digital] activity and performance in real-time - anything from a number of visitors to the *Ministerial departments*, to how users access *GOV.uk* and what is processing time for different digital services (which appears to be the focus of the performance dashboard). As stated in the '*Government Computing*' article[57], the objective was:

> *"…to measure daily web traffic, weekly visits and unique visitors per week. In addition, it provides comparisons from the previous week's performance and compares traffic to previous levels achieved on the now-defunct DirectGov and Business Link websites. The performance platform also measures how often different pages of the site were accessed and what percentage of these were successful in providing users with what they wanted to find out."* (24.10.2012)

Although incredibly resourceful, observing government performance for transactional services is not the focus of our research; at this stage, we want to know more about macro pageview/visit dynamics when it comes to the *GOV.uk* as a platform, the main homepage, primary menu categories and the landing pages of *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*. Although this data is both digital and open, accessing and formatting separate sets was not as straightforward as one would anticipate. Foremost, most of the data was displayed in real-time, and one had to apply an algorithmic intervention to access historical records and re-format results to make them comparable for further analysis. In some cases, we had to file an *FOI* request in order to obtain relevant information. Secondly, the *GDS* team has decided to communicate only the most relevant web-traffic categories, which means we had to work with what was available. Luckily, those categories were applicable for all *Ministerial departments* but were much more limited when observing *GOV.uk* as the entire site, which explains why we have decided to focus only on pageviews, and user visits data as it was applicable, both for

*GOV.uk* as a platform and for landing pages of *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*. Thirdly, we were facing a time-frame challenge, foremost because different departments have migrated to *GOV.uk* at different times, which means that their web-traffic data was recorded at different starting points. Even though we could access *GOV.uk* web-traffic data going back to June 2013, records for *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* were much more fragmented. After detailed analysis, we reconciled this issue by narrowing our *Demand-input* time frame between March 2014 and May 2016. Although shorter than initially envisioned, this temporal sequence of 27 months still allows us to make comparable observations between different government entities and materialise a proper interpretation of the public agenda-attention in the realm of *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace.*

***Contextual relevance***: when faced with so much choice, it is not necessarily beneficial to incorporate all the available information; at times, it is much more helpful to focus on context and less on volume. We believe that the best way to compute a macro perspective of the *Demand-input* is to focus on the number of unique visitors and pageviews. After all, these variables are most telling when decoding the public's interest as they tell us how many people are engaging (unique visitors) with the government on *GOV.uk* and what they want to think about (pageviews). Even though we are unable to compute the actual result of that engagement (what happens after they download a policy paper or read a press release), we can still make evidence-based assertions when it comes to our ability to compute the frequency of the publics' agenda-attention - which is the focus of this research.

It is essential to clarify that we will only use the unique visitors' data in this section, while the pageviews analytics will also be our primary *Detector* (what people think about when accessing *GOV.uk*) when measuring the supply-demand (miss)alignment. Such an approach is quite simple; while the unique visitors' data helps us contextualise public interest in real terms (how many people), the pageviews information helps us define the public's interest (what are those people searching for). For example, an *FCO's* homepage may have had 15,000 unique visitors in a given month, but that does not tell us which content was accessed. On the other hand, the pageviews can be more revealing, as a single unique visitor could easily access the same info-flow on several occasions in a given month or several different info-flows during their single visit to the site. The ability to differentiate between volume and interest helps us calculate the public agenda-attention frequency for individual departments, policy areas, policies, topical events and locations.

As we begin to unpack the web-traffic characteristics, an imposing figure emerges **1,268,513,463** – a number of unique visitors to the *GOV.uk* platform between March 2014 and May 2016 (see figure 4-6). The fact that 1.2 billion visits were materialised within the 27 months encourages validation for the *GDS* team that a *GOV.uk* is going mainstream. Ultimately, we would like to know how these visitors are spread across different menu domains – which departments, policies or locations get the most visits? However, due to our data constraints, we can only make simple formulations, which suggest that just over 180 million unique visitors have accessed *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* by landing on their landing pages. Considering that these departments are responsible for supplying 77.02% of all the info-flows across *GOV.uk*, one would expect a stronger correlation between the number of visitors and their homepages. However, we must bear in mind that visitors land on individual pages and that a department's homepage is just an organisational umbrella for all the content related to that department (each info-flow has its page/s). Therefore, these numbers do not necessarily suggest that only 14.26% of unique visitors have engaged with *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*; in contrast, these patterns suggest that most visitors tend to access content by landing straight to the relevant page without necessarily relying on homepage navigation.

Correspondingly, we can assume that a large portion of the remaining 1 billion visitors (85.74%) have a targeted, rather than a 'surfing' approach when visiting *GOV.uk*. Therefore, we can observe visitors' landing patterns, but we can also detect unequal distribution along the time-continuum. Although a 27-month period is not an insignificant time sample from the analysis perspective, it is essential to highlight that we can only observe distribution patterns in the context of one full calendar year (2015).

Nevertheless, even with these limitations, we can make valuable observations:
- Unsurprisingly, 2015 is responsible for the largest share of unique visitors (610 million / 48.13%) with an average of 50 million monthly visitors. But, some months exhibit above the average patterns, like March (64 mil.), June (58 mil.), August and November (57 mil. each). August was probably most surprising due to its association with the holiday season. However, such high numbers suggest that while the *UK Government* may be in a bureaucratic holiday mode, the same may not apply to the *British* public. Such disparity between the supply and demand dynamics suggests how difficult it is to balance the objectives/needs of two different agenda groups' objectives/needs. Still, as new data becomes available, it would be helpful to observe if monthly numbers fluctuate from year to year or whether they remain relatively stable - suggesting a predictive [calendar-driven] nature of the demand-cycle.

March 2014 – May 2016

**1,268,513,463**

A total number of unique visitors across the entire GOV.uk platform

**180,845,565**

24+2 Departments' Landing pages

**14.26%**

**1,087,667,898**

All other GOV.uk pages

**85.74%**

Annual and Monthly Distribution: Number of Unique Visitors across GOV.uk

| **Mar-Dec 2014** | **2015** | **Jan-May 2016** |
|---|---|---|
| 373,059,807 | **610,491,324** | 284,962,332 |
| 29.41% | **48.13%** | 22.46% |

M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M
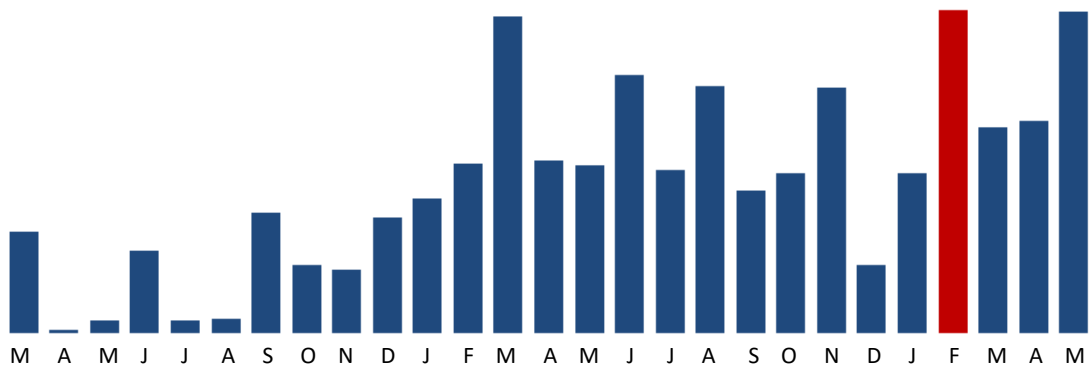
| **Mar-Dec 2014** | **2015** | **Jan-May 2016** |
|---|---|---|

| **FEBRUARY 2016** – largest number of Unique Visitors across GOV.uk | **65,296,154** | **5.15%** |
|---|---|---|

### Redistribution patterns: March 2014 – May 2016
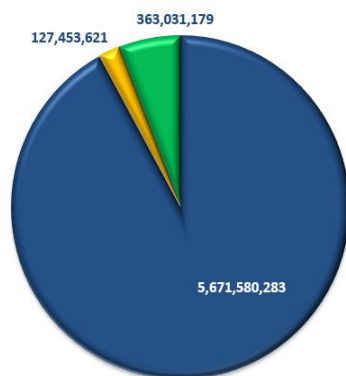
■ Entire GOV.uk  ━━ 24+2 Departments' Landing pages

*Legend:* Red fields, figures and columns indicate the highest value in respective constellations
Blue-columns refer to the number of visitors across the entire GOV.uk platform for each month
Green graph-line refers to the number of visitors on 24+2 Departments' landing pages for each month

**Figure 4-6:** GOV.uk Demand-input: Number of Unique Visitors on the GOV.uk platform and 24+2 Departments' landing pages [Mar 2014 – May 2016]. Source: www.GOV.uk (*performance dashboard and data from FOI requests*).

- While overall patterns suggest sustainable growth, we are surprised that 2014 numbers (the top year for the aggregated *Supply-output*) are not as strong as one would anticipate. Especially if we consider that *GOV.uk* has been in operation since February 2012, almost two years before our observed time sample. As we are two months short of a full calendar year, we have used a formula[58] to predict that 2014 would have had 162 million fewer visitors than in 2015. Therefore, an increase of 36.37% in the number of visitors between 2014 and 2015 suggests that a significant shift has taken place, as the level of public participation has changed the way *GOV.uk* may be perceived and utilised. It would be difficult to isolate a single reason for such a sharp increase in public attention, but it seems that by January 2015, most of the visitors had no other choice but to visit *GOV.uk* if they needed to access information or conduct a transactional service; as most content has migrated from old websites.

- We also know that the most active month in our sample was February 2016, with 65,296,154 unique visitors across the *GOV.uk* platform, capturing 5.15% of the *agenda-attention-market-share*. While the peak month for 2015 was in March, with 64,555,690 unique visitors (5.08%). It would be interesting to observe these patterns over five years to determine with greater certainty whether certain months exhibit the same punctuations each year, suggesting a strong correlation with institutional policy calendar or specific deadlines.

- As we only have five months of data for 2016, we had to apply a formula[59] to simulate its full-calendar trajectory. Correspondingly, our calculations suggest that 2016 could have had 683,909,596 unique visitors, or an increase of 12.03% from 2015. This suggests that although some unique visitors to *GOV.uk* are likely to increase each year, it is questionable if we will witness a punctuated increase that is larger than 15% as the site matures and gradually reaches its peak in terms of unique visitors.

- Moreover, when comparing *GOV.uk* homepage redistribution patterns with *Ministerial departments* landing pages, although widely different in volume, their punctuations patterns appear to be in sync. Such alignment proposes that user's activity continues well beyond departments' homepage, most probably incorporating info-flows related to those departments. While the homepages may serve as a point of reference for visitors seeking orientation, the actual tools to filter information and the content/services themselves are located outside the landing page perimeter, which could explain the disparity between the levels of the *Supply-output* and the number of visitors.

Overall, we are reminded that 85.74% of the unique visitors have had access to pages that reside outside the *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* homepages and that their numbers tend to fluctuate, both as a result of institutional stipulations/deadlines and the arbitrary nature of public attentiveness to policy issues. Although the essential *GOV.uk Performance* data cannot help us determine whether the frequency of public attention is influenced by external (unexpected) events, media reports, changes in policy/regulation or strategic campaigns; it can help us contextualise how users' access and interact with *GOV.uk*, who were their referral sites and search engines and what is the ratio between new and returning visitors.

Now that we have established the scale of public engagement with *GOV.uk* by analysing the unique visitors, we ought to reflect on their activity scope by focusing on the available pageviews data. Contrary to visitors' information, these analytics are much more revealing as they record each time a webpage has been accessed. Therefore, in the context of our research, the pageviews are an essential ingredient when it comes to computing the frequency of the agenda-attention as a representation of public attentiveness to various policies, events and locations. Available data suggest that **6,162,065,083** pageviews were materialised between March 2014 and May 2016 (see figure 4-7). However, due to the pioneering nature of *GOV.uk*, it is practically impossible to determine if this number is above or below market expectations. However, the lack of benchmarks cannot diminish the value of this rather impressive number - it certainly highlights the relevance of *GOV.uk* as a platform where public and institutional agendas cross-sect at every level of *Open-meets-Digital* construct.

Furthermore, this data becomes even more valuable if we can correlate it with our visitors' analysis. Earlier in the text, using Alexa.com, we have stipulated that, on average, each unique visitor on its daily visit to *GOV.uk* is associated with 3.1 pageviews. However, our much more detailed 27-month sample (1.2 billion unique visitors and 6.1 billion pageviews) unveils a slightly different (averaged) result – 4.8 pageviews per visitor's daily access. Because these patterns constantly fluctuate, it is impossible to isolate a stable figure to retain its value during our research time-frame. That is why we are establishing macro indicators and benchmarks as we seek to understand how the scope and scale of public engagement are mutually interrelated on the *GOV.uk* platform.

However, if we start from a premise that a bounce rate for *GOV.uk* is around 40%, we could assert that the remaining 60% of unique visitors need to engage with two or more pages during their daily visit to *GOV.uk* in order to accomplish their task – to find information and/or conduct a digital transaction. If we take into account that *GOV.uk* is comprised of thousands

**Figure 4-7:** GOV.uk Demand-input: Number of Pageviews on the GOV.uk platform and 24+2 Departments' landing pages [Mar 2014 – May 2016]. Source: www.GOV.uk (*performance dashboard and data from FOI requests*).

and thousands of pages, a question arises – what is the starting page for engagement on *GOV.uk*?  At first, the question may not be relevant to our study, but the choice of a landing page may unveil how users interact with digital government – especially as *GOV.uk* is a single webpage that hosts 357 entities, numerous knowledge categories and digital services which all have their customised landing pages. Therefore, a traditional construct, whereby a webpage has only one starting point, is already disrupted in the context of *GOV.uk* organisational typology. If we consider the platform's novelty and sheer size, the logic will command that most visitors would start their orientation by accessing the main homepage (www.gov.uk) and/or a *Ministerial departments'* landing page.

Interestingly, the results paint a different picture. It appears that 92.04% of pageviews (5.6 billion) are not associated with our focused homepages (2.07% for *GOV.uk* central homepage and 5.89% for *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments'* landing pages). Such distribution patterns suggest two things: (1) that the majority of visitors to *GOV.uk* know what they want/need and do not depend on the homepage navigation to 'surf' their way through the platform; and (2) that visitors tend to rely more on third-party intermediaries (search engines, social media, news portals, blogs and other websites), not *GOV.uk* homepages, to identify a direct link to information/service that they require. This suggests that *what* the public *wants to think about* on *GOV.uk* is somewhat pre-framed by different intermediaries – either by their algorithmic formula (artificial intelligence), strategic communication (agenda framing) or by the virality effect (wisdom of the crowds). Correspondingly, different *GOV.uk* navigational routes may influence visitors' perceptions by aligning their original objective/task with an available resource or recalibrating their attention in a different direction by presenting the users with content/services they did not know existed. As such, *GOV.uk* may not succeed in changing *how people think*, but it can undoubtedly navigate *what they want to think about* by 'nudging' visitors to engage with different actionable government priorities.

Like with our unique visitors' data, we can observe how the pageview patterns are distributed along our 27-month long continuum (March 2014 – May 2016):

- Considering the unique visitors' results, we are not surprised to see that 2015 is also a peak year in this domain with 3,045,432,163 pageviews. It also means that 610 million unique visitors (48.13%) were responsible for close to 50% of the pageview activity during those twelve months. They further reinforce our assertion that 2015 was a rather momentous year for displaying the public agenda on *GOV.uk*. Although impressive, these numbers are not equally distributed throughout the year. On the

one hand, we can identify eight peak months in 2015 with the above-average score of 253 million pageviews – January being at the top of the list with 289 million (9.49%) pageviews. On the other hand, we do not have a perfect 'peak-months' correlation between pageviews and the unique visitors' data. Although they share associations with three months (Mar-Jun-Apr 2015), they are not equal in their ranking value. Such disequilibrium could suggest that a 'bounce-rate' is much lower for those months where pageviews outperform visitors' number. For example, we can tell that 9.37% of visitors were incentivised to visit *GOV.uk* at the peak of a holiday season (August 2015); but only 7.69% of pageviews were materialised during that month. This means that many visitors did not engage with content past the landing page (higher 'bounce-rate').

- Furthermore, if we understand the growth trajectory in the context of a full calendar year, we ought to predict patterns for 2014 (missing two months) and 2016 (missing seven months' worth of data). In the process, we have reapplied the same formula as we did for the unique visitors by predicting annual growth based on their existing data patterns. Such an approach allows us to suggest that the year-to-year increase would not have been equally distributed, as we could predict a 49.9% increase between 2014 and 2015, while in the case of 2015/16 transition, that has computed a significantly lower 12.1% growth. Nevertheless, on the one hand, these simulations predict continuous year-to-year growth; on the other hand, they indicate that *GOV.uk* is gradually maturing as the new visitors' pool is shrinking.

- Even though 2015 was the most active year, January 2016 was associated with the largest number of pageviews – in a total of 300 million, or 4.87% of the *agenda-attention-market-share*. The second-highest month in our time frame was January 2015, with 289 million pageviews, suggesting that the first month of the year is trending high on the public agenda. While the number of unique visitors does not show the same high-peak patterns for January as pageviews do, it suggests that those visitors were repeatedly required to access several pages to accomplish their task. Such patterns can lead us to think that the pageviews volume is closely related to the 31 January tax return deadline. As such, we can only reconfirm our view that future research in this domain should take into consideration vital *GOV.uk* deadlines or reoccurring policy announcements (e.g., the budget) when trying to establish whether monthly punctuations are driven purely by random public demand or whether they are conditioned by the pre-existing institutional life-cycles.

- When comparing *GOV.uk* platform numbers with the *GOV.uk homepage* and the landing pages of *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments,* we know that they are dealing with highly unequal distribution, both in terms of volume and frequency. However, that does not necessarily mean that their punctuations are not aligned. If we observe the three stack graphs (bottom-right) in Figure 4-7, we can see that aggregated results suggest much closer alignment between the *GOV.uk homepage* and the rest of the *GOV.uk site*. Those punctuations are much more in-sync than they are in the context of *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*, who exhibit distinctively different patterns. We could assert a much stronger pageview alignment with the rest of GOV.uk content when visitors start their orientation from GOV.uk central homepage than when the same process is initiated from the department's landing page.

This last point highlights the importance of expanding our analysis to include the pageviews data for landing pages relating to *GOV.uk* menu categories as we seek to decode how the public agenda-attention is spread across different navigational routes (see figure 4-8). To simplify navigation, the *GDS* team has tried to contextualise users' engagement with the platform by establishing ten key menu categories. As a result, we can observe how the government's internal organisational thinking is projected in the *Open-meets-Digital* domain. Even though some may say that such an approach is over-simplifying how government operates, it has improved our ability to find and interlink information.

Before we go into detailed analysis, it is important to clarify that while we could access web analytics for the *GOV.uk homepage* and *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* landing pages via *Performance dashboard*, that was not the case for the menu categories. To obtain pageviews data for their landing pages, we had to file a *Freedom of Information Request* with the *Cabinet Office.* Fortunately, we were granted our request, but the data for the *Worldwide* category was incomplete, so we have decided to exclude it from the analysis. As we proceed, it is helpful to note that landing pages' function differs from one category to another. For example, *Organisations'* landing page serves as a list of all 357 entities on *GOV.uk*, *Consultations* homepage informs users how to make their submissions, and *Publications – Statistics – Announcements* landing pages provide the users with tools to filter and interlink government info-flows. As such, we cannot expect that each menu category would attract the same level of web traffic, which in itself is valuable data as it will allow us to observe how the publics' agenda-attention is spread across these navigational routes in comparison to the *GOV.uk homepage* and *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* landing pages.

| Objective | Associated GOV.uk Menu Categories | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPERATIONS**<br>*How the UK Government works, how it is organised and who are the principal departments and agencies on GOV.uk* | How government works | Organisations |
| **AGENDA**<br>*How is UK Government policymaking organised in terms of its policies and related info-flows* | Policies<br>Publications<br>Statistics | Announcements<br>Worldwide<br>*Consultations* |
| **ENGAGEMENT**<br>*How citizens can get involved with the UK Government through consultations, e-petitions and strategic communication* | Get involved | Consultations |
| **PERFORMANCE**<br>*How we can monitor GOV.uk performance in the form of real-time web analytics* | Performance | |

*Consultations reside both within the Agenda and Engagement domains as a standalone menu category and as part of the Publications info-flow collection

**Figure 4-8:** GOV.uk organisational typology in the context of the Operations, Agenda, Engagement and Performance contextual domains. Source: GOV.uk

For our analysis, we have organised relevant results in the context of three data groups: (1) *GOV.uk homepage*; (2) *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* landing pages; and (3) pageviews data for nine menu categories (see figure 4-9). We start by focusing on the combined number of 548,890,794 pageviews materialised across all three groups between March 2014 and May 2016. This means that close to 9% of the overall public activity on *GOV.uk* has originated within these 36 homepages. Again, as there are no comparable benchmarks, it is difficult to say if these numbers reflect the government's expectations. However, if we consider that these homepages are a podium for promoting, filtering and linking relevant content/services, we can agree that the percentage share is not dismissive. Either way, we now know that these navigational routes play a significant role in terms of users' orientation across the platform. While the 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments result is the highest (5.89%) for all three groups, we have to remember that this is a combined figure for all 26 landing pages. This means that, in a particular context, the *GOV.uk homepage* is the most influential performer, with 127,453,621 pageviews (2.07%). Somehow surprisingly, we find that the collective of nine menu categories has attracted only 0.88% of the overall *agenda-attention-market-share* (58,405,994

| PAGEVIEWS DATA [March 2014 – May 2016] | |
|---|---|
| **6,162,065,083**<br>GOV.uk platform (all pageviews) | **127,453,621**<br>GOV.uk homepage pageviews |

**Key Landing Pages:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **25,931,707**<br>Publications (0.42%) | **11,792,049**<br>Announcements (0.19%) | **8,559,431**<br>Organisations (0.13%) |
| **4,529,496**<br>Policies (0.07%) | **4,443,639**<br>Statistics (0.07%) | **1,399,286**<br>How government works (0.02%) |
| **1,055,949**<br>Get involved (0.01%) | **592,432**<br>Consultations (0.009%) | **102,005**<br>Performance (0.001%) |

**363,031,179**
24+2 Cabinet-level Departments (*combined pageviews for their landing pages*)

| PM | DPM | AGO | CO | DBIS | DCLG | DCMS | DfE | DEFRA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.15%** | **0.22%** | **0.13%** | **4.21%** | **5.64%** | **6.32%** | **1.38%** | **16.06%** | **5.46%** |

| DFID | DfT | DWP | DECC | DH | FCO | HMT | HO | MoD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.32%** | **5.38%** | **11.00%** | **3.59%** | **6.94%** | **6.81%** | **5,16%** | **8.50%** | **6.94%** |

| MoJ | NIO | OAG | OLHC | OLHL | SO | UKEF | WO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.99%** | **0.10%** | **0.03%** | **0.04%** | **0.02%** | **0.32%** | **0.18%** | **0.13%** |

*Monthly pageviews average for 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments' landing pages:* **13,445,599**

**PAGEVIEWS AGENDA-ATTENTION-MARKET-SHARE in percentage terms:**

**24+2 Cabinet-level Departments:**    363,031,179    [5.89%]

**GOV.uk homepage:**    127,453,621    [2.07%]    548,890,794

**Combined nine menu categories:**    58,405,994    [0.88%]    [8.90%]

**Publications:**    [0.42%]

**Announcements:**    [0.19%]

**Organisations:**    [0.13%]

**Policies:**    [0.07%]

**Statistics:**    [0.07%]

**How government works:**    [0.02%]

**Get involved:**    [0.01%]

**Consultations:**    [0.009%]

**Performance:**    [0.001%]

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations

**Figure 4-9:** Pageview data for GOV.uk platform, GOV.uk homepage and key landing pages [March 2014 – May 2016]. Source: GOV.uk (*performance dashboards and data from FOI requests*).

pageviews). Such redistribution patterns suggest that the *GOV.uk* navigational routes may not be utilised to their full potential.

Although we will be focusing on the agenda-attention of the *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* in greater detail as part of our *Power* chapter analysis, we felt that it would be helpful to briefly reflect on how pageviews data (public agenda) is redistributed among the 26 government entities. We will do this by highlighting their *agenda-attention-market-share* in the context of their combined total of 363,031,179 pageviews. Somehow, surprisingly we detect that the *Department for Education* (DfE) is at the top of the list with its share of 16.06% pageviews, followed by the *DWP* (11.00%), *HO* (8.50%), *DH* (6.94%), *MoD* (6.94%) and the *Foreign & Commonwealth Office* with 6.81% of the pageviews. Suppose we break down these top 25% departments by their mandate. In that case, we can see a clear split between two policy perspectives: (1) DfE + DWP + DH cluster that represents a transactional social welfare domain (education, employment, benefits, pension, and health) with 34% of the pageviews; and (2) HO + MoD + FCO cluster that incorporates security, immigration, military affairs and diplomacy with a combined total of 22.25% of pageviews. These figures also suggest that the top 25% of departments (n6) are responsible for 56.25% of pageviews among the *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* and that majority of those interactions tend to be concerned with social welfare, security and foreign affairs. In comparison, the bottom 25% of departments (n6) is responsible for only 0.45% of the pageviews. However, that is not so surprising as those departments tend to focus on devolved regions, parliamentary affairs and legal issues, and as such, they tend to attract a more sector-specific audience and less mainstream attention. This means that the remaining 14 landing pages (the medium 50%), an eclectic list of departments, both in terms of their mandate, size and importance, are responsible for 43.31% of all the pageviews.

As we move down the table, we can conclude our observations with a closer look at the nine menu categories. From the earlier analysis, we know that the combined *agenda-attention-market-share* for the group stands at 0.88%, but now we also know that the *Publications'* landing page is at the top of the list with 25,931,707 pageviews (0.42%). While the coordinative domain is not just occupying the top tier position, 14,139,658 pageviews also separate it from the second-ranking *Announcements* (0.19%). Such a gap between the two collections is rather interesting as it suggests that the *Demand-input* for the coordinative-agenda perspective is much more pronounced than the search for the communicative nature of the policymaking. Furthermore, when we combine all three info-flow collections, we know that they are responsible for 0.68% of the pageviews in the menu domain, which means that

when visitors diverge from the *GOV.uk homepage* and/or *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* landing pages, their preference is to use info-flow landing pages to filter through the government noise.

Equally, we are not surprised that the *Performance* section is at the bottom of the list with 0.001% (n102,005) pageviews, as that menu option was not always most visible on the GOV.uk homepage or most relevant for the mainstream audience in terms of its content. However, we are surprised that the *Get involved* (0.01%) and *Consultations* (0.009%) categories are not trending as high as one would anticipate, especially as the government seems to be continually advocating[60] for more public engagement with the public sector. On the one hand, such low levels of orientation with respective landing pages can be a significant cause of concern for the government. On the other hand, it also shows the exclusivity of the policy *Consultations* process, as pageview numbers (n592,432) suggest that while the level of orientation may be lower, that the effect of their submissions may have a lasting impact on the government's regulatory framework and policymaking decisions.

Like most other data sources, the *GOV.uk* web page analytics cannot single-handedly provide a definite answer to *what people want to think about*. However, they can measure public attentiveness at a new level, as we can observe how individual citizens engage with *GOV.uk* in their terms. Data relating to the number of visitors and pageviews can be observed as a 'neutral' variable because we were not conditioning users' behavioural characteristics. We are not asking them questions or measuring their responses in a simulated research environment. On the contrary, we are merely identifying and analysing their digital footprint as they engage with the *GOV.uk* platform. However, this is not to say that the scope and scale of users' interaction with the government information and services are not influenced by the third parties (media and special interest groups), nudged by the artificial intelligence (algorithms) and/or is amplified by the social media dynamics (viral content). However, as we are focusing on the end-results within our designated *Open-meets-Digital* ecosystem, we will not be concentrating on the causal side of their decision to access specific information on the *GOV.uk* platform.

While web page analytics in research is not a novel feature, our ability to connect users' attention data with the individual actionable government priorities has been strengthened by creating *GOV.uk* as a single government website. Thanks to the *GDS* capacity to collate pageviews data, we can now file an *FOI* request for a specific page and use it to determine the frequency of the publics' agenda-attention for a particular department, policy area, individual

policy, topical event or a worldwide location. In terms of our research, the requested pageview analytics will relate to a landing page URL for specific, actionable items. By focusing on the conceptual umbrella that brings all info-flows together for each actionable item, we will compute the public's agenda-attention more holistically, rather than focusing on individual info-flows.

Therefore, from our research mandate's perspective, we have designated the pageviews as our primary *Detector* of the public agenda within the *GOV.uk* realm. In addition to establishing macro-benchmarks, we will also be able to accomplish a much more important task – to measure the level of (miss)alignment between the institutional preferences and public attentiveness regarding specific agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities. In the following section, we aim to compute and visualise those dynamics as our contribution to the methodology framework of agenda-setting research. We will argue that the 'act-of-alignment' between the two agendas may indicate a formation of a new policy window – an opportunity for a policy entrepreneur to initiate a reprioritisation process of the ranking order along the agenda-attention continuum.

## (miss)Aligned Agendas: Supply-output meets Demand-input

Now that we have established an *agenda-attention-market-share* and macro benchmarks for the *Supply-output* and *Demand-input*, we can use the aggregated data to determine the level of (miss)alignment between the institutional and public agendas. In essence, this will be our first opportunity to compare the agenda-attention dynamics within the *GOV.uk* realm. The objective is to maintain the contextual integrity of available data by presenting figures in their original context while assessing the degree of agenda (miss)alignment in terms of shared 25-50-25 priority ranking. In order to observe both macro and micro patterns, we will apply a two-tier comparative analysis: (1) **Aggregated perspective** (March 2014 – May 2016) – determine the level of the agenda (miss)alignment by focusing on a 'peak-year' indicator (which annual sample is associated with most info-flows, number of visitors and pageviews); and (2) **Segmented perspective** (2015) – analyse the level of the agenda (miss)alignment for selected agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities by focusing on info-flows and pageviews. As such, the scope and scale of our samples are conditioned by two factors:

- In theory, one would calculate the number of visitors or pageviews for each info-flow by using *GOV.uk* web analytics. In practice, our access to *GDS's* web data is much more constrained as digital insights for individual URLs are not easily accessible to the public. Although they are not available on the *GOV.uk Performance platform*, data for specific info-flows can still be obtained by submitting a *Freedom of Information* request. However, as we are dealing with 122,898 info-flows, it is improbable that the government would agree to spend hours collating relevant data on our behalf, not to mention how challenging it would be to process and analyse its vast amount of information. Therefore, we will be focusing only on the agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities for which we have complete *Supply/Demand* data sets. Even though we will be dealing with a smaller sample, we will still test our model in its entirety and gain valuable insights for future research.

- While the *Supply-output* is aligned with our entire research time-frame (May 2010 – May 2016); a *Demand-input* dataset is only available for March 2014 – May 2016 period, which means that we had to forgo the first four years of the supply data in order to create a comparable platform for both domains. As a result, 2015 is our only 'full-year sample (2014 is missing two months of the *Demand-input* data, and our observed time-frame ended in May 2016). Thus, we will use March 2014 – May 2016 sample for our aggregated observations and 2015 as a platform for our segmented analysis. In that way, we will visualise both macro and micro agenda-attention dynamics that relate to the institutional preferences and public attentiveness to agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities.

### *Aggregated analysis*

By focusing on the 'peak-year' indicator (which year has the highest level of activity in terms of its volume), we will observe how (miss)aligned the institutional and public agendas may be in terms of their aggregated agenda-attention. Such computation will provide us with insightful 'macro-glimpse' into what happens when *Supply-meets-Demand* within the *GOV.uk*.

We begin our analysis by dividing the aggregated data into two clusters (see figure 5-10):

1. **The Supply-output** table is displaying (1) combined info-flows; and (2) individual data for three info-flow collections (*Publications - Announcements - Statistics*). When compared with *Demand-input* figures, such fragmentation allows examining if individual collections mimic the aggregated pattern or exhibit different agenda-attention alignment with the public agenda.

2. ***The Demand-input*** table is focusing on two *GOV.uk* web analytics (number of unique visitors and pageviews) and is sub-divided into two categories: (1) figures relating to the entire *GOV.uk* content; and (2) figures relating to the landing pages for *Publications*, *Announcements* and *Statistics*. In that way, we can also make comparable supply-demand observations for three info-flow collections.

When we look at the table, we can see a clear-cut division between the two agendas. On the one hand, the *Supply-output* figures show that the largest number of info-flows was published in 2014. This is also true for the *Publications* (n14,929) and the *Announcements* (n9,504%) collections, while the *Statistics* saw their most potent activity in 2015 with a combined total of 3,251 info-flows. On the other hand, the *Demand-input* data indicates that the largest number of unique visitors (610 million) and pageviews (3 billion) was materialised in 2015. The same pattern applies for the number of pageviews when it comes to *Publications* (12.3 million), *Announcements* (5.5 million) and *Statistics* (2.5 million) landing pages – all reaching their peak

| SUPPLY-output | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | sample Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **All Info-Flows combined** | **26,642** | 25,085 | 8,601 | **60,328** |
| **Publications** | **14,929** | 13,034 | 4,831 | **32,794** |
| **Announcements** | **9,504** | 8,800 | 2,766 | **21,070** |
| **Statistics** | 2,209 | **3,251** | 1,004 | **6,464** |
| DEMAND-input | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | sample Total |
| **Unique Visitors** all GOV.uk content | 373,059,807 | **610,491,324** | 284,962,332 | **1,268,513,463** |
| **Pageviews** all GOV.uk content | 1,693,045,263 | **3,045,432,163** | 1,423,587,657 | **6,162,065,083** |
| PAGEVIEWS for LANDING PAGES: | | | | |
| **Publications** | 8,851,161 | **12,362,204** | 4,718,342 | **25,931,707** |
| **Announcements** | 4,313,456 | **5,520,839** | 1,957,754 | **11,792,049** |
| **Statistics** | 927,453 | **2,531,905** | 984,281 | **4,443,639** |

*Legend:* Red fields and figures indicate the highest value in respective constellations

**Figure 4-10:** Macro picture (aggregated data): When a Supply-output meets Demand-input on GOV.uk [March 2014 – May 2016]. Source: GOV.uk (*publications, statistics and announcements sections; performance dashboard and data from FOI requests*).

in 2015. Although it is clear that both agendas occupy distinctly different 'peak-years', the difference within the *Supply* domain is much less radical when compared to the *Demand* side, which exhibits a significant change in the agenda-attention dynamics between 2014 and 2015.

Although some may argue that our 2014 *Demand-input* figures are not 100% accurate as we are missing two months' worth of data, we can dispute such claim on two levels:

1. If we look at the web analytics data for the entire *GOV.uk* content, it is immediately apparent that the difference of 237 million unique visitors and 1.3 billion pageviews between 2014 and 2015 is far too significant for those two missing months to distort our macro observations; *and*

2. In terms of the individual landing pages, where the missing data is more likely to affect the final result, we have decided to apply a quick, predictive calculation[61] in order to simulate a total number of pageviews for a full 2014 calendar year:

    - **Publications landing page (pageviews)**
    2014: 10-months of data (8,851,161) / predicted full-year volume (10,621,393)
    2014 (predicted volume) vs 2015 = **+1,740,811 for 2015**

    - **Announcements landing page (pageviews)**
    2014: 10-months of data (4,313,456) / predicted full-year volume (5,176,147)
    2014 (predicted volume) vs 2015 = **+344,692 for 2015**

    - **Statistics landing page (pageviews)**
    2014: 10-months of data (927,453) / predicted full-year volume (1,112,943)
    2014 (predicted volume) vs 2015 = **+1,481,962 for 2015**

As we can see from the above results, the agenda-attention shift was not affected by the incomplete dataset. Therefore, when we compare these simulated results with 2015 *Demand-input* figures, we can confirm that the number of pageviews remains significantly higher than in 2014, which confirms that the highest level of public agenda-attention on *GOV.uk* was materialised in 2015.

From the aggregated perspective, we can confidently state that the institutional and public agendas are not necessarily aligned, especially regarding the overall *Supply-output* and in reference to *Publications* and *Announcements*. However, those patterns are not extended to the *Statistics,* as they remain the only element where both agendas are aligned in terms of their 2015 output and input. Although, when it comes to the volume of published info-flows, we should stress that the difference between 2014 and 2015 is not so extensive. For example, it would have taken only 1,557 extra info-flows to equalise 2015 with 2014 aggregated output. The same is applicable for the *Publications* (n1,895) and the *Announcements* (n704). Although

the results highlight the difference in 'peak-years' and see how the agenda (miss)alignment is exhibited in macro terms, we can still determine how these patterns change when focusing on individual actionable items. However, before we move into the segmented analysis, it is advisable to reflect on the following three observations as we seek to understand the macro-dynamics of the agenda-attention:

1.  ***GOV.uk visibility*** – by 2014, the platform was in full-scale operation for two years, but that does not necessarily mean that it has found its way to people's screen. Perhaps, in the beginning, the emphasis was on migrating content/departments and not so much on public outreach. However, that must have changed at the end of 2014 as we can see a significant increase in public activity in 2015 as the level of interaction almost doubled. This suggests that once the content upload has stabilised, the attention has shifted to the citizen's engagement.

2.  ***GOV.uk content*** – it is highly plausible that the *Supply-output* reached its optimum upload capacity in 2014. By then, all the retroactive (up to 2010) material was most likely assigned to respective collections, and new content was reflective of departments' regular activity on the *GOV.uk* platform.

3.  ***Open Data construct*** – as the government was trying to adhere to *Open Government* principles and operate in *Digital-by-Default* modus operandi, departments were expected to proactively publish data that reflects their activity, impact, and transparency level. However, it is possible that the very act of adopting those principles was not necessarily aligned with the organisational capacity to adapt to this new construct. Hence, we detect such low levels of activity within the *Statistics* collections at the onset of our research – in 2010, there were only 237 published info-flows. However, all changes in 2014 and especially in 2015 when we can detect 3,251 info-flows – a 1,271% increase since 2010 (it suggests that by 2015, most departments were actively publishing open datasets).

Although the agendas may not be in sync in terms of volume and frequency, this is not to say that their monthly or daily punctuation patterns were not aligned, albeit at different degrees. Such dynamics could reinforce our notion that the ranking order of actionable government priorities is not static along the agenda-attention continuum. Therefore, real-time monitoring of the *GOV.uk* platform can enable both the researchers and the policymakers to be more in-tune with shifting agendas and use those indicators as early warning signals. At times, those sudden reprioritisations (punctuations) could indicate a disruptive nature of the external

events; on other occasions, they could indicate a new policy window forming as institutional and public agendas appear to be more aligned.

### *Segmented analysis*

The objective is to analyse selected samples from four policy clusters to determine the level of agenda-attention (miss)alignment for individual agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities. In the process, we will be focusing on (1) 24+2 *Cabinet-level Departments*; (2) 47 *Policy Areas*; (3) 21 *Individual Policies* (related to *Foreign Affairs* policy area and the *FCO* department); and (4) on 18 *Worldwide Locations* - we will exclude the *Topical Events* due to their temporal agenda attributes and lack of *Demand-input* data. In order to make our observations more comparable between the clusters, we will apply the following protocol:

- *Supply/Demand* data from 2015 will be presented in an aggregated format;

- *Supply-input* data will represent *Institutional Agenda* (published info-flows);

- *Demand-input* data will represent *Public Agenda* (pageviews for relevant URLs);

- Actionable government priorities will be ranked within their respective policy cluster in terms of their aggregated value (from largest to smallest); *and*

- The ranked entries will be associated with 25-50-25 priority domains.

Results for each policy cluster will be presented in two distinct ways: (1) a ranking order of actionable items will be established separately for each agenda so that we can observe data values and priority dynamics within their respective context; and (2) actionable items will be listed alphabetically or contextually in juxtaposition with *Supply* and *Demand* columns which will indicate item's priority area (25-50-25 colour code) and a ranking placement position (numerical value) for each agenda. If the observed entries display the same priority colour code in both agenda columns, we would say that their agenda-attention characteristics are aligned. If those entries share the same ranking placement position, we could say that the configuration communicates a much stronger alignment between the two agendas. Once that is established, we will analyse data to determine the following:

1. How many entries does each 25-50-25 priority domain contain?
2. How many actionable items exhibit the agenda-attention alignment?
3. How many actionable items share, both the priority area and the numerical value of their ranking order placement within each agenda?

4. How are the (miss)aligned dynamics reflected at the Top 25% and the Bottom 25% of the continuum? Who is occupying the first and last spot within the ranking order, and are we more likely to see higher levels of the agenda alignment at the top-end?

5. What is the level of disconnect among the misaligned actionable items? We will calculate this degree of separation by observing the priority rank for each agenda: (1) one-step (e.g. top-middle and middle-bottom patterns); and (2) two-steps (e.g. top-bottom relationship). For example, if an actionable item is commanding the institutional attention at the Top 25% level, but in terms of public attentiveness is at the Bottom 25%, we can say that the miss-alignment is 2-steps disconnected.

Overall, it is hard to make predictions about what kind of results and patterns may emerge, but we are confident that the proposed methodology will enable us to visualise what happens when *Supply-meets-Demand* within the *GOV.uk* realm. While we expect to detect a certain degree of alignment, it will be interesting to observe which agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities are more likely to exhibit shared agenda-attention characteristics and whether the alignment is more substantial at the top end of the continuum?

### Agenda-Shapers: 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments

Thanks to the *GDS Performance Platform,* we could access pageview analytics for all *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* without submitting an *FOI* request. Data-set in question relates to the number of times visitors had accessed a department's homepage in 2015. If we consider that these landing pages serve as an orientation platform for the users, the pageview data is reflective of the publics' agenda as the attention is focused on the overall department and not on a specific unit, policy or workflow. We have the aggregated figures relating to all the info-flows published in 2015 by 24+2 departments on the supply side of the equation. We are unique in observing how the *Open-meets-Digital* construct can help us establish an organisational ranking order based on internal power dynamics and perceived institutional hierarchy. Furthermore, we would test whether the scope and scale of the department's activities reflect the public's interest/need to access it is landing page to obtain information or conduct a relevant transaction. While some departments will always attract more attention due to their high-profile mandate (Apex group: *PM, DPM, CO, FCO, MoD, HO* and *HMT*), it would be interesting to see whether all seven entities will exhibit the agenda alignment characteristics and whether they will dominate the Top 25% of the continuum?

We start by establishing a ranking order for each agenda separately to assign a numerical placement and associated 25-50-25 priority area for each department (see figure 4-11). As such, we can see that the Top 25% contains six, Middle 50% fourteen and the Bottom 25% six entities. On the one hand, such configuration allows us to observe patterns for each agenda within their contextual domain. On the other hand, it reminds us that the aggregated ranking order will not provide us with the agenda (miss)alignment insights as we cannot possibly equate the value of an individual info-flow with that of a single pageview. In order to remedy this obstacle, we are relying on 25-50-25 data standardisation to observe which departments occupy the same priority area in both agendas. As a result, we could materialise a third table (within figure 4-11) that lists departments in their contextual order and provides visual and numerical indicators for their priority ranking in both agendas. In that way, we can quickly determine the level of agenda (miss)alignment (who shares the same colour-code and ranking placement number) and a degree of disconnect when the agendas are misaligned (e.g., top-middle, middle-bottom or bottom-top patterns).

Before we analyse the agenda (miss)alignment characteristics, it helps reflect on departments that occupy first and last place in the ranking order in both agendas. Firstly, in terms of institutional preferences, we can see that the *FCO* is at the top of the list with its 2,001 info-flows, while *DfE's* homepage attracts most publics' attention 24,582,508 pageviews. As such, we can observe a triple divergence at the very top of the Top 25% domain: (1) two different agenda-shapers occupy number one spot; (2) in terms of the mandate, the two departments could not be more different from each other; while one is concerned with country's foreign affairs and trade, the other one is responsible for the national educational system; and (3) the *FCO*, unlike *DfE* is exhibiting the agenda alignment characteristics. Even though we see a complete agenda misalignment at the very top end of the continuum, these two agenda-shapers share one interesting characteristic – a significant gap between them and the second-ranking department. In the case of *FCO vs DECC,* we have a difference of 860 info-flows, and in terms of *DfE vs DWP,* the gap is measured in 6,524,415 fewer pageviews. Such a substantial gap in ranking order tends to highlight the level of separation at the very top of the agenda-power hierarchy.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, we find *OLHL* at the very bottom end of the ranking order in both agenda groups (1 info-flow and 37,455 pageviews). Considering its legislative mandate, we know that its info-flow output will always be lower than other departments, attracting more of a niche rather than a mainstream audience. Like the top entry, the gap between these two departments and their predecessors is also significant, but not as extreme (*OLHC vs OLHL* with

a difference of 18 info-flows and *OLHL vs OAG* with a gap of 14,210 pageviews). Nevertheless, the institutional preferences and public attention appear to be well aligned when it comes to the *Office of the Leader of the House of Lords*, even if this is probably due to a lack of interest in this department's work. As we move forward with our analysis, we can establish that 14 agenda-shapers (53.84%) exhibit agenda-alignment characteristics. Although there are no official benchmarks that can tell us whether this level of agenda alignment is above or below the expectations; we can confidently say that the results are encouraging for the government as they show that the *point-of-connect* between the institutional activity of the *Cabinet-level Departments* and public attentiveness to scope and scale of their work is above 50%.

| SUPPLY [2015] | | | DEMAND [2015] | | | Ranking Order | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dept. | Info-Flows | | Dept. | Pageviews | | [2015] | SUPPLY | DEMAND |
| FCO | 2,001 | 1 | DfE | 24,582,508 | | PM | 13 | 14 |
| DECC | 1,141 | 2 | DWP | 18,058,093 | | DPM | 21 | 18 |
| MoD | 1,060 | 3 | HO | 12,773,494 | | AGO | 23 | 21 |
| DEFRA | 1,028 | 4 | DH | 11,464,091 | | CO | 12 | 12 |
| DfT | 1,027 | 5 | MoD | 11,117,428 | | DBIS | 8 | 8 |
| DCLG | 945 | 6 | FCO | 10,927,663 | | DCLG | 6 | 7 |
| HMT | 867 | 7 | DCLG | 9,987,192 | | DCMS | 16 | 16 |
| DBIS | 863 | 8 | DBIS | 9,434,510 | | DfE | 10 | 1 |
| DWP | 854 | 9 | HMT | 9,064,660 | | DEFRA | 4 | 10 |
| DfE | 830 | 10 | DEFRA | 8,843,708 | | DFID | 17 | 17 |
| HO | 664 | 11 | DfT | 8,632,915 | | DfT | 5 | 11 |
| CO | 595 | 12 | CO | 6,990,498 | | DWP | 9 | 2 |
| PM | 550 | 13 | DECC | 5,503,365 | | DECC | 2 | 13 |
| MoJ | 468 | 14 | PM | 3,854,740 | | DH | 15 | 4 |
| DH | 452 | 15 | MoJ | 3,312,970 | | FCO | 1 | 6 |
| DCMS | 450 | 16 | DCMS | 2,081,597 | | HMT | 7 | 9 |
| DFID | 425 | 17 | DFID | 1,991,342 | | HO | 11 | 3 |
| WO | 304 | 18 | DPM | 304,736 | | MoD | 3 | 5 |
| NIO | 133 | 19 | UKEF | 268,658 | | MoJ | 14 | 15 |
| SO | 130 | 20 | SO | 260,965 | | NIO | 19 | 23 |
| DPM | 99 | 21 | AGO | 211,002 | | OAG | 22 | 25 |
| OAG | 79 | 22 | WO | 170,019 | | OLHC | 25 | 24 |
| AGO | 65 | 23 | NIO | 163,181 | | OLHL | 26 | 26 |
| UKEF | 52 | 24 | OLHC | 74,877 | | SO | 20 | 20 |
| OLHC | 19 | 25 | OAG | 51,665 | | UKEF | 24 | 19 |
| OLHL | 1 | 26 | OLHL | 37,455 | | WO | 18 | 22 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-11**: 24+2 Agenda-Shapers ranking order and agenda (miss)alignment for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and performance dashboard*).

As we move forward with our analysis, we can establish that 14 agenda-shapers (53.84%) exhibit agenda-alignment characteristics. Although there are no official benchmarks that can tell us whether this level of agenda alignment is above or below the expectations; we can confidently say that the results are encouraging for the government as they show that the *point-of-connect* between the institutional activity of the *Cabinet-level Departments* and public attentiveness to scope and scale of their work is above 50%.

Consequently, it is important to understand how many departments exhibit agenda alignment characteristics in their 25-50-25 priority associations. Also, it would be helpful to examine if the aligned departments share commonalities in terms of their topical mandate and/or profile (e.g., apex vs transactional):

- **Top 25% domain**: only two departments (*FCO* and *MoD*) exhibit the agenda-attention alignment at the very top of the continuum. While they both belong to the '*apex*' group of *Cabinet-level Departments,* they also share a solid geopolitical and foreign affairs mandate. Although they share the Top 25% priority domain, their ranking placements suggest that they are trending higher in the institutional agenda context than within the public domain (*FCO* #1 vs #6 / *MoD* #3 vs #5). Even though we could say that the departments have strong links, both in terms of their activities and perceived importance; two-thirds of agenda-shapers within this priority domain remain misaligned;

- **Middle 50% domain**: if we consider that this priority domain hosts fourteen entities, we are not surprised that 57.14% of departments (n8) exhibit the agenda alignment characteristics. When it comes to shared 'profile' characteristics, we can identify two clusters: (1) *CO, HMT* and *PM* that belong to the 'apex' group; and (2) *DBIS, DCMS,* and *DFID* that can be classified as 'transactional' departments. While the *MoJ* ('legal') and *SO* ('devolved government') is in standalone mode. However, when it comes to shared 'topical' associations, we can highlight *HMT, DBIS* and *DCSM* cluster as a group of agenda-shapers whose work relates to the economy, business, industry and regulations; *and*

- **Bottom 25%**: while four agenda-shapers display agenda alignment characteristics, neither belong to the 'apex' group. As such, we can see that *OLHC* and *OLHL* share a strong 'legislative' mandate and that *AGO* and *OAG* are in standalone mode (legal and devolved government domains). From the public perspective, we are not surprised to see limited agenda-attention for these four agenda-shapers as neither of them is

'transactional' departments (citizens do not need to engage with them), nor do they attract a high degree of mainstream attention like the 'apex' group does. Equally, we could say that in terms of institutional hierarchy, these departments will always remain at the periphery of the agenda-attention due to their strictly defined mandates which limit their coordinative and communicative agenda outputs. Although somehow contradictory, it appears that the lack of public interest for these departments may be why we have such strong agenda alignment at the periphery of the agenda-continuum throughout 2015.

Even though the results show weaker agenda alignment among the 'apex' departments at the Top 25% of the continuum; we cannot ignore the fact that 71.42% of 'apex' departments exhibit the agenda-alignment characteristic, albeit at different priority domains (*FCO* and *MoD* at the Top 25% and *PM, CO* and *HMT* in the Middle 50%), which leaves the *HO* and *DPM* as the only two 'apex' members that are misaligned. Therefore, we could say that lack of agenda alignment among the 'apex' departments at the Top 25% range is not so much because of agenda divergence, as it is due to lack of their presence at the top of the ranking order. Although our initial assumptions are somehow validated - 'apex' departments exhibit more robust agenda-alignment characteristics as a group - we are proven wrong about their capacity to occupy the top end of the continuum.

In terms of calculating the strength of an agenda-alignment, we know that six of those departments (23.07%) also share a numerical placement – which means that they occupy the same ranking place in both agendas (in the third table, those numbers are indicated in red font). While we do not find any double-matches at the top end of the spectrum, we can identify five departments (*CO, DBIS, DCMS, DFID,* and *SO*) within the Middle 50% range and *OLHL* Bottom 25% who share such characteristics. Collectively, these six departments are very eclectic regarding their mandates and size, so it is rather hard to establish any visible patterns (e.g., *CO* is the only one from the 'apex' group). However, if pressed for some form of categorisation, we could suggest that *DBIS, DCMS* and *DFID* have more in common in terms of their 'transactional' activity with the end-user, then the remaining three distinctly different. Overall, we could suggest that such 'double-matches' could be used as a form of validation that the agenda-alignment level is much more connective for an agenda-shaper compared to those who only share the priority domain.

If fourteen agenda-shapers exhibit the agenda-alignment, that also means that 46.16% of the observed departments (n12) do not share such characteristics. Equally, it is interesting to

observe that the misalignment level is highest (66.66%) at the top end of the spectrum and lowest at the bottom end of the spectrum (33.33%), while the Middle 50% domain hosts 42.85% of the misaligned departments. Such patterns indicate that the level of misalignment is stronger as one moves up the ranking order and less prevalent at the bottom end of the agenda-attention continuum. Thus, we could say that institutional and public agendas are less likely to be compatible if both groups exhibit stronger agenda-attention frequencies within the same domain. Which raises an interesting question – how disconnected are those two agendas?

Although we agree that the agenda misalignment is caused and influenced by numerous factors, for the sake of our current observations, we will focus only on one indicator when determining the level of disconnect. As stated in our data protocol, we shall calculate this divergence in terms of the department's priority association within each agenda. For example, in the case of *DPM,* we know that it resides within the Bottom 25% regarding institutional preferences and public attention at the Middle 50%. We call this pattern a '1-step disconnect' because divergence is between associated priority domains. In contrast, the '2-step disconnect' would refer to a department with one agenda placement within Top 25% and another at the Bottom 25% of the continuum. In the context of our 24+2 agenda-shapers, we can see that all twelve misaligned departments display a '1-step disconnected' pattern as they all operate within the top-middle (n8) or middle-bottom (n4) range. In those terms, we could say that the misalignment frequency may not be so disruptive as we see no evidence of the extreme agenda divergence (top-bottom leap) between the two groups.

### Actionable Government Priorities: 47 Policy Areas

Considering the importance of this policy cluster - acting as a contextual/organisational umbrella for all government policies – we have decided to secure the pageview data for all 47 policy areas by submitting an *FOI* request. Fortunately, our request was approved, and we now know how many times users have accessed a landing page for each policy area in 2015. We are also confident that the level of public attention is accurately aligned with the conceptual meaning of the policy area on the *GOV.uk* platform as they were accessing their homepages in order to seek orientation within that specific topical cluster. In that way, we can compare the aggregated volume of the pageviews with those of published info-flows in a much more reflective manner.

| Aggregated SUPPLY-output 2015 Ranking Order | | Info-Flows | Aggregated DEMAND-input 2015 Ranking Order | | Page views |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PA#44 | UK economy | 4,269 | PA#32 | Public health | 71,684 |
| PA#43 | Transport | 3,243 | PA#39 | Social care | 57,240 |
| PA#03 | Business and enterprise | 2,615 | PA#31 | Planning and building | 56,987 |
| PA#19 | Government ETA* | 2,345 | PA#22 | Housing | 49,733 |
| PA#27 | National Health Service | 1,977 | PA#27 | National Health Service | 36,956 |
| PA#12 | Environment | 1,909 | PA#30 | Pensions and ageing society | 34,173 |
| PA#17 | Foreign affairs | 1,590 | PA#12 | Environment | 32,195 |
| PA#09 | Defence and armed forces | 1,429 | PA#02 | Borders and immigration | 30,148 |
| PA#36 | Schools | 1,418 | PA#44 | UK economy | 26,911 |
| PA#06 | Community and society | 1,388 | PA#05 | Climate change | 18,794 |
| PA#32 | Public health | 1,372 | PA#20 | Government spending | 18,480 |
| PA#11 | Energy | 1,295 | PA#41 | Tax and revenue | 17,835 |
| PA#41 | Tax and revenue | 1,279 | PA#25 | Local government | 14,304 |
| PA#08 | Crime and policing | 1,158 | PA#10 | Employment | 14,153 |
| PA#24 | Law and the justice system | 1,090 | PA#17 | Foreign affairs | 12,845 |
| PA#45 | Wales | 1,007 | PA#24 | Law and the justice system | 11,626 |
| PA#16 | Food and farming | 958 | PA#04 | Children and young people | 11,575 |
| PA#10 | Employment | 952 | PA#18 | Further education and skills | 10,284 |
| PA#22 | Housing | 893 | PA#21 | Higher education | 9,919 |
| PA#18 | Further education and skills | 822 | PA#03 | Business and enterprise | 9,320 |
| PA#04 | Children and young people | 817 | PA#08 | Crime and policing | 9,292 |
| PA#42 | Trade and investment | 755 | PA#23 | International aid & develop | 9,180 |
| PA#29 | Northern Ireland | 731 | PA#37 | Science and innovation | 8,557 |
| PA#05 | Climate change | 726 | PA#06 | Community and society | 8,111 |
| PA#46 | Welfare | 701 | PA#46 | Welfare | 7,460 |
| PA#37 | Science and innovation | 621 | PA#19 | Government ETA* | 7,378 |
| PA#23 | International aid & develop | 588 | PA#07 | Consumer rights and issues | 6,482 |
| PA#02 | Borders and immigration | 583 | PA#43 | Transport | 5,124 |
| PA#28 | National security | 453 | PA#09 | Defence and armed forces | 4,838 |
| PA#25 | Local government | 415 | PA#15 | Financial services | 4,621 |
| PA#47 | Wildlife and animal welfare | 371 | PA#42 | Trade and investment | 3,638 |
| PA#13 | Equality, rights and citizenship | 353 | PA#14 | Europe | 3,574 |
| PA#31 | Planning and building | 299 | PA#36 | Schools | 3,525 |
| PA#38 | Scotland | 296 | PA#16 | Food and farming | 3,184 |
| PA#39 | Social care | 295 | PA#11 | Energy | 3,139 |
| PA#01 | Arts and culture | 272 | PA#33 | Public safety and emergencies | 3,075 |
| PA#35 | Rural and countryside | 256 | PA#13 | Equality, rights & citizenship | 2,818 |
| PA#33 | Public safety and emergencies | 225 | PA#40 | Sports and leisure | 2,543 |
| PA#20 | Government spending | 197 | PA#47 | Wildlife and animal welfare | 2,324 |
| PA#15 | Financial services | 192 | PA#28 | National security | 2,091 |
| PA#30 | Pensions and ageing society | 157 | PA#01 | Arts and culture | 2,006 |
| PA#21 | Higher education | 156 | PA#34 | Regulation reform | 1,671 |
| PA#26 | Media and communications | 130 | PA#38 | Scotland | 1,264 |
| PA#14 | Europe | 118 | PA#26 | Media and communications | 1,210 |
| PA#40 | Sports and leisure | 117 | PA#35 | Rural and countryside | 893 |
| PA#07 | Consumer rights and issues | 103 | PA#45 | Wales | 215 |
| PA#34 | Regulation reform | 93 | PA#29 | Northern Ireland | 200 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-12**: 47 Policy Areas ranking order for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

We begin by materialising a ranking order for each agenda separately to assign a priority domain and a numerical placement for each policy area (see figure 4-12). There are 47 policy areas in this cluster, and when we apply a 25-50-25 standardisation formula, we get the following distribution: Top 25% contains eleven, Middle 50% twenty-five and Bottom 25% eleven entries. Unlike agenda-shapers, where we could argue that some departments are inherently more important or influential, it would be difficult, although not impossible, to categorise a group of policy areas in terms of their 'apex' attributes. Foremost, our interpretations would be subjective because institutional and public preferences tend to change, making it difficult to establish a qualifiable benchmark that could designate an 'apex' classification for a selective group of policy areas. As such, we will refrain from designating any preconceived labels and will focus on establishing the level of agenda (miss)alignment for this particular group of actionable government priorities solely based on available data.

We commence by determining which policy area is listed first and last along the agenda-attention continuum in both agenda groups. Firstly, we can observe no evidence of the agenda alignment in either case – each group displays distinctly different choices. While the institutional agenda firmly puts the *UK economy* at the number one spot (n4,269 info-flows), *Public health* appears to be attracting most of the public attention (71,684 pageviews). However, these two areas share three key characteristics: (1) while the two policy areas' ranking order differs, they both occupy the Top 25% domain in their respective agenda groups. For instance, the *UK economy* is at #1 (institutional) and #9 (public); while the *Public health* is at #11 (institutional) and #1 (public); (2) they both exhibit the agenda alignment characteristics, so regardless of their ranking placement, they appear to be a top priority for both groups; and (3) there is a significant gap between them and the second-ranking policy area, which suggests that both actionable priorities are firmly at the top of the top priorities – *UK economy* vs *Transport* (a difference of 1,026 info-flows) and *Public health* vs *Social care* (a gap of 14,444 pageviews). Such patterns at the top of the tops suggest that while the government is focused on broader economic affairs, the public is more concerned with immediate healthcare issues affecting their everyday lives.

As we move down the list to the last place, we can see that the *Regulation reform* (n93 info-flows) is at the bottom of institutional activity, while the lack of public attention for *Northern Ireland* (200 pageviews) keeps that policy area firmly at the bottom of their list. On the one hand, we could perhaps expect lower *Supply-output* when it comes to regulatory affairs, but one is somehow surprised at such a low level of public interest for the region known for its share of challenges regarding security, economy and identity politics. However, when we look

where these two policy areas are placed in the opposite agendas, we can see that they are both trending much higher – for example, *Northern Ireland* is much more important for the institutional agenda (Middle 50% at #29); while the *Regulation reform*, although still within the Bottom 25% domain, is surprisingly ranked much higher (#42) with the public then it is with the government. Undoubtedly, many factors will influence one's ranking placement along the agenda-continuum, but in terms of *Northern Ireland*, *Scotland* and *Wales,* we can spot a clear pattern. While all three devolved regions have failed to attract enough public attention (Bottom 25%), they are trending much higher on the government agenda (firmly embedded within the Middle 50% domain).

To determine the level of agenda (miss)alignment, we have created a third table (see figure 4-13) where all 47 policy areas are listed in alphabetical order and placed in juxtaposition with the results from the two agendas. In that way, we can visually and numerically determine which area is (miss)aligned, to what degree and whether it shares a numerical placement rank (indicated in red font). We begin by noticing that only 44.67% of policy areas (n21) are aligned across the two agendas and that only two of them share both the priority domain and the numerical placement rank. In contrast to the agenda-shapers, these results suggest that most policy areas (n26) are misaligned, and that the agenda divergence is relatively substantial between institutional preferences and public attentiveness. As such, it is even more critical to understand which policy areas do exhibit agenda alignment characteristics:

- **Top 25%:** only 8.51% of the agenda alignments have occurred within the top end of the continuum as *Environment, National health service, Public health* and *the UK economy* cross-sect both agendas. We can also go one step further and say that the *National health service* appears to be the most aligned in this domain as it also shares a numerical placement ranking – it is at number five in both groups. However, we are also reminded that the frequency of the agenda-attention for the vast majority of policy areas (63.63% / n14) at this level remains misaligned. Nevertheless, we can confidently say that the *UK Government* and the *British* public share a common interest or concern for health, the environment and the economy. Perhaps, these patterns could be interpreted as early-warning [data] signals that the new policy window is about to emerge – a sign of change or disruption;

| | Policy Area [2015 aggregated data] | SUPPLY | DEMAND |
|---|---|---|---|
| PA#01 | Arts and culture | 36 | 41 |
| PA#02 | Borders and immigration | 28 | 8 |
| PA#03 | Business and enterprise | 3 | 20 |
| PA#04 | Children and young people | 21 | 17 |
| PA#05 | Climate change | 24 | 10 |
| PA#06 | Community and society | 10 | 24 |
| PA#07 | Consumer rights and issues | 46 | 27 |
| PA#08 | Crime and policing | 14 | 21 |
| PA#09 | Defence and armed forces | 8 | 29 |
| PA#10 | Employment | 18 | 14 |
| PA#11 | Energy | 12 | 35 |
| PA#12 | Environment | 6 | 7 |
| PA#13 | Equality, rights and citizenship | 32 | 37 |
| PA#14 | Europe | 44 | 32 |
| PA#15 | Financial services | 40 | 30 |
| PA#16 | Food and farming | 17 | 34 |
| PA#17 | Foreign affairs | 7 | 15 |
| PA#18 | Further education and skills | 20 | 18 |
| PA#19 | Government ETA* | 4 | 26 |
| PA#20 | Government spending | 39 | 11 |
| PA#21 | Higher education | 42 | 19 |
| PA#22 | Housing | 19 | 4 |
| PA#23 | International aid and development | 27 | 22 |
| PA#24 | Law and the justice system | 15 | 16 |
| PA#25 | Local government | 30 | 13 |
| PA#26 | Media and communications | 43 | 44 |
| PA#27 | National Health Service | 5 | 5 |
| PA#28 | National security | 29 | 40 |
| PA#29 | Northern Ireland | 23 | 47 |
| PA#30 | Pensions and ageing society | 41 | 6 |
| PA#31 | Planning and building | 33 | 3 |
| PA#32 | Public health | 11 | 1 |
| PA#33 | Public safety and emergencies | 38 | 36 |
| PA#34 | Regulation reform | 47 | 42 |
| PA#35 | Rural and countryside | 37 | 45 |
| PA#36 | Schools | 9 | 33 |
| PA#37 | Science and innovation | 26 | 23 |
| PA#38 | Scotland | 34 | 43 |
| PA#39 | Social care | 35 | 2 |
| PA#40 | Sports and leisure | 45 | 38 |
| PA#41 | Tax and revenue | 13 | 12 |
| PA#42 | Trade and investment | 22 | 31 |
| PA#43 | Transport | 2 | 28 |
| PA#44 | UK economy | 1 | 9 |
| PA#45 | Wales | 16 | 46 |
| PA#46 | Welfare | 25 | 25 |
| PA#47 | Wildlife and animal welfare | 31 | 39 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-13**: 47 Policy Areas agenda (miss)alignment for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

- **Middle 50%:** most of the agenda alignments (27.65%) appear within this priority domain as we can identify thirteen policy areas whose institutional preferences and the level of public attentiveness are aligned. Unlike its counterparts at the Top 25%, these policy areas appear to have stronger associations as we could detect a formation of four clusters with shared policy mandates: (1) Economical - *Tax and revenue, Trade and investment, Energy and Food and farming; (2)* Social Welfare - *Employment* and *Welfare*; (3) Education - *Further education and skills, Children and young people* and *Science and innovation;* and (4) Security - *Crime and policing and Law and the justice system* for both agendas. We have two stand-alone policy areas outside this perimeter whose mandates relate to international aid and local government. Overall, we could say that 60% of these areas (n8) are somewhat inter-connected regarding economic affairs and prosperity. Such reflections are in sync with institutional preferences whose top priority in 2015 was always the *UK economy*. Also, *Welfare* is probably the most aligned policy area as it shares both the priority domain and the ranking placement in both agendas – firmly in the middle of the agenda-attention continuum at the number 25 spot.

- **Bottom 25%:** as we reach the bottom end of the spectrum, we can detect similar patterns as we did at the top-end, with only four agenda alignments across the two agendas - *Media and communications, Regulation reform, Rural and countryside* and *Sports and leisure*. At first, they all appear very detached from each other in terms of their shared mandate characteristics, but we can identify *Regulation reform* as the only one in this domain that can cross-sect with the other three policy areas.

While we know that 26 policy areas are misaligned (55.31%), we are not sure to what degree, which is why we rely on our 25-50-25 visual guide to determine those gaps. As such, we know that 98.07% of misaligned areas are 1-step disconnected – almost equally distributed in terms of top-middle and middle-bottom change. This leaves only *Government spending* and *Pensions and ageing society* as two misaligned policy areas that are 2-steps disconnected (top-bottom change). In both cases, we have somewhat a reversed role when it comes to agenda priorities:

- By most accounts, one would expect *Government spending* to occupy a more prominent place on the institutional than public agenda. Somewhat surprisingly, this policy area is at #39 place (Bottoms 25%) when it comes to institutional agenda-attention and at the Top 25% (#11 spot) in terms of public attentiveness to the same issue. Considering that 2015 was the election year (change of government), it is

surprising that this policy area is not trending higher on the government agenda. Equally, high-level public attentiveness suggests that specific segments of the society were keen to scrutinise government spending in greater detail – suggesting that the national election could have played a role in amplifying the agenda-attention frequency.

- If we consider the shifting demographic trends, we are not surprised to see *Pensions and ageing society* in the Top 25% of the public agenda (#6 spot). However, we are puzzled as to why it resides at the periphery of the institutional agenda by occupying a #41 place at the Bottom 25% of the continuum. While it would be difficult to say if this is due to a temporary policy slowdown or whether its reflective of the government's long-term strategy, one thing is for sure, the agenda-attention data serves as a potent indicator that the public appears to be much more concerned with this policy area.

The above findings tend to challenge some of our preconceived notions of how different agenda groups perceive actionable government priorities. Hence, we are encouraged to see that our methodology framework exposes data signals and patterns that one would not necessarily encounter when using traditional agenda methodologies and data sources. As such, we feel encouraged that our *Open-meets-Digital* construct can be applied to decode agenda priorities and assess the level of alignment between institutional preferences and public attentiveness to the same policy issues.

### Actionable Government Priorities: 21 Individual Policies (small-N)

Before we begin the analysis, it is essential to clarify the observed sample's scope and scale. Although our large-N relates to 219 individual policies, we knew from the onset that we would have difficulties obtaining pageview data for so many individual URLs. To have a manageable sample, both in terms of data access and data analysis, we have decided to establish a small-N sample. The selection protocol was guided by two factors: (1) because our worldwide locations small-N was based on the number of published info-flows (top entries); we wanted to select policies, not in terms of their *Supply-output*, but based on their contextual association with a single department and affiliated policy area; and (2) considering that the *FCO* was responsible for the largest number of published info-flows between 2010-16, it was logical to select all the individual policies that were associated with this agenda-shaper and the related *Foreign affairs* policy area. In the process, we were able to identify 21 individual policies that collectively shape and guide the *UK*'s international relations.

| Aggregated SUPPLY-output 2015 Ranking Order | | Info-Flows | Aggregated DEMAND-input 2015 Ranking Order | | Pageviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P#22 | British nationals overseas | 355 | P#57 | Counter-terrorism | 115,135 |
| P#83 | Exports and inward investment | 312 | P#22 | British nationals overseas | 60,158 |
| P#115 | Human rights internationally | 145 | P#60 | Cyber security | 57,188 |
| P#57 | Counter-terrorism | 95 | P#83 | Exports and inward investment | 21,431 |
| P#82 | Export controls | 66 | P#01 | 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy | 20,656 |
| P#156 | Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa | 54 | P#115 | Human rights internationally | 17,968 |
| P#43 | Climate change international action | 51 | P#156 | Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa | 16,695 |
| P#60 | Cyber security | 38 | P#82 | Export controls | 13,584 |
| P#42 | Climate change impact in developing countries | 25 | P#08 | Afghanistan | 12,147 |
| P#81 | European single market | 18 | P#205 | UK Overseas Territories | 11,586 |
| P#01 | 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy | 16 | P#43 | Climate change international action | 10,245 |
| P#121 | Iran's nuclear programme | 13 | P#81 | European single market | 7,795 |
| P#183 | Sexual violence in conflict | 13 | P#214 | Weapons proliferation | 6,826 |
| P#198 | The Commonwealth | 9 | P#42 | Climate change impact in developing countries | 6,310 |
| P#08 | Afghanistan | 6 | P#50 | Conflict in fragile states | 6,049 |
| P#205 | UK Overseas Territories | 6 | P#198 | The Commonwealth | 5,927 |
| P#214 | Weapons proliferation | 4 | P#183 | Sexual violence in conflict | 5,222 |
| P#84 | Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination | 3 | P#158 | Piracy off the coast of Somalia | 4,387 |
| P#50 | Conflict in fragile states | 2 | P#121 | Iran's nuclear programme | 2,395 |
| P#158 | Piracy off the coast of Somalia | 1 | P#191 | Stability in the Western Balkans | 1,824 |
| P#191 | Stability in the Western Balkans | 0 | P#84 | Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination | 1,771 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-14**: 21 Individual Policies ranking order for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

As *FOI* request for the pageview data relating to landing pages for each policy was approved, we can now compare the frequency of institutional agenda-attention and the level of public attentiveness for specific international policies. Even though we are dealing with a relatively small sample, we can say that the results can be insightful as we would be able to observe how the agenda (miss)alignment is presented within a cluster of policies that deal with transboundary issues. Before we proceed, it is worth remembering that the *FCO* agenda-shaper has shown agenda alignment at the Top 25% domain (institutional agenda: #1 / public agenda: #6). While the *Foreign affairs* policy area was misaligned with the 1-step disconnection between the two agenda groups (institutional: Top 25% - #7 / public: Middle 50% - #15), it will be interesting to see if the level of alignment will mirror the macro patterns and if it will expose shared preferences for a cluster of policies?

We start by establishing a ranking order for both agenda groups and assigning a priority association for each policy – as such, we can see that the Top 25% contains five, Middle 50% eleven and the Bottom 25% five entries (see figure 4-14). As we quickly scan the agenda-attention dynamics, we can immediately conclude that there is no agenda alignment at the very top or the very bottom of the continuum. While the *British nationals* overseas occupy the number one spot within the institutional agenda (n355 info-flows), the public appears to be more concerned with *Counter-terrorism* policy (n115,135 pageviews). Although the focus on *British nationals overseas* policy is also shared by the public (ranked at #2), *Counter-terrorism* activity is slightly lower down the government's priority list (ranked at #4). To help us understand how important this divergence is, we also have to look at the relationship between the top and second-ranking entry. In the previous two sections, we have noticed that agenda-shapers and policy areas exhibit a significant gap in info-flows and pageviews between the top two entries – further emphasising the importance of the top placement on the agenda-attention continuum.

In this case, we have slightly different patterns. Only 43 info-flows separate the British nationals overseas from the second-ranked Exports and inward investment policy from the institutional perspective. Nevertheless, from the public agenda perspective, we have a much stronger divide as a difference of 54,967 pageviews keeps *Counter-terrorism* policy firmly in the number one spot. Such unequal redistribution at the very top of the tops suggests that while the citizens are concerned with the impact of terrorism on their lives, they are also in great need of consular assistance while living and/or travelling abroad. Equally, we could say that the government appears responsive when it comes to its duty to provide consular support and travel alerts.

At the end of the continuum, we find two policies that could not be more apart in terms of geopolitical context and proximity. It appears that the government was not concerned with the *Stability in the Western Balkans* as they have failed to materialise even a single info-flow in 2015 regarding this policy. Equally, we can see that *Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination* has failed to capture people's interest as its landing page was accessed only 1,771 times throughout the year. Although the *Falkland's* issue is trending slightly higher on the government agenda (ranked at #18), the *Balkans* has also failed to capture the public's interest as it firmly ranked at the second-lowest place (#20).

To help us compare the two agendas, we have created a third table where all policies are listed alphabetically and placed in juxtaposition with the ranking/priority results from both agendas. In that way, we can quickly determine the type and the level of agenda (miss)alignment among 21 policies (see figure 5-15). Even though the two agenda groups do not share the same level

| | **Individual Policy** [2015 aggregated data] | **SUPPLY** | **DEMAND** |
|---|---|---|---|
| P#08 | **Afghanistan** | 14 | 9 |
| P#22 | **British nationals overseas** | 1 | 2 |
| P#156 | **Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa** | 6 | 7 |
| P#115 | **Human rights internationally** | 3 | 6 |
| P#83 | **Exports and inward investment** | 2 | 4 |
| P#01 | **2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy** | 11 | 5 |
| P#57 | **Counter-terrorism** | 4 | 1 |
| P#43 | **Climate change international action** | 7 | 11 |
| P#50 | **Conflict in fragile states** | 17 | 15 |
| P#82 | **Export controls** | 5 | 8 |
| P#60 | **Cyber security** | 8 | 3 |
| P#81 | **European single market** | 10 | 12 |
| P#214 | **Weapons proliferation** | 15 | 13 |
| P#205 | **UK Overseas Territories** | 14 | 10 |
| P#42 | **Climate change impact in developing countries** | 9 | 14 |
| P#121 | **Iran's nuclear programme** | 12 | 19 |
| P#198 | **The Commonwealth** | 13 | 16 |
| P#158 | **Piracy off the coast of Somalia** | 18 | 18 |
| P#84 | **Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination** | 16 | 21 |
| P#191 | **Stability in the Western Balkans** | 19 | 20 |
| P#183 | **Sexual violence in conflict** | 12 | 17 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-15**: 21 Individual Policies agenda (miss)alignment for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

of attention when it comes to the first and last entry, the overall agenda alignment stands at 61.90% as thirteen policies exhibit the same priority characteristics in both groups:

- **Top 25%:** at this level, only three entries are aligned (14.28%) as *British nationals overseas, Exports and inward investment* and *Counter-terrorism* policies capture both agendas' attention at the same priority level. Although their mandates are not similar, we could say that the *British nationals overseas* and *Exports and inward investment* share the 'transactional' attribute as both policies require a front-line engagement between a citizen and a state (providing-requesting consular support and export licences). While the *Counter-terrorism* policy is a much more complex transboundary issue that requires the cooperation of many different agenda-shapers;

- **Middle 50%:** as to be expected, this domain contains the largest number of agenda alignments (33.33%) as we identify seven individual policies. When we look at the policies dealing with *Afghanistan, Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa, Climate change international action, European single market, UK Overseas Territories, Climate change impact in developing countries* and *The Commonwealth,* we can immediately spot three cross-cutting themes. The first cluster relates to conflict and stability in the wider *MENA + Afghanistan*[62] geopolitical area, the second one is focused on the transboundary effects of the climate change, and lastly, we have three geopolitical areas that continue to shape *British* foreign affairs, from the *EU* to the *Commonwealth* and the overseas territories; *and*

- **Bottom 25%:** similarly, to the top end of the continuum, we encounter only three policy alignments (14.28%). As such, we can tell that the *Piracy off the coast of Somalia, Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination* and *Stability in the Western Balkans* have failed to materialise enough agenda-attention in both groups. While the *Balkans* and *Somalia* share (post)conflict traits, both institutional and public agendas are much more aligned when it comes to the *Piracy off the coast of Somalia* issue, as this is the only policy that has the exact ranking placement in both groups – firmly positioned at #18 spot.

When it comes to eight policies that remain misaligned (38.10%) across all three priority domains, we can say that all of them exhibit a 1-step disconnection, which is equally distributed between the top-middle (n4) and the middle-bottom (n4) range. Considering that the misalignment level is much lower than in the two previous sections, and it is only manifested in 1-step disconnected form, we could argue that international affairs, at least in 2015, do not appear to be divisive, as one would expect.

### *Actionable Government Priorities: 18 Worldwide Locations (small-N)*

Even though the original cluster of 237 worldwide locations represents our large-N, we had to reduce the observed sample size to obtain pageview data for comparative analysis. As such, we have selected 19 locations based on their 2010-16 aggregated *Supply-output* (those with the largest number of associated info-flows). Even though our *FOI* request was successful, data for *Iran* was missing – most likely due to technical error, but we could not retrieve it. Nevertheless, we have decided to proceed with the acquired dataset - how many times users have accessed locations' landing pages in 2015 – and focus on the remaining 18 worldwide locations for this analysis.

When we think about worldwide locations from the institutional perspective, we can assume that the level of government activity in this domain reflects geopolitics, long-term strategies and responses to the ongoing crisis. Equally, we could say that *GOV.uk* users have different reasons for accessing the location's landing page. While some may be looking for travel alerts, others may be interested in particularities of the *UK*'s relationship with a specific country in terms of politics, trade, international aid, bi-lateral agreements or strong diaspora/expat links. It would be interesting to discover which locations exhibit the agenda alignment between the two groups and at what priority level. However, before we proceed, it is important to remind ourselves that even though we are making observations in the context of 2015, that all the locations in our sample already have a Top 25% institutional agenda designation in terms of their 2010-16 aggregated value. Therefore, we observe how the reprioritisation effect works when we focus on a single year and how this new institutional ranking may be (miss)aligned with the public agenda-attention.

We start by establishing a ranking order for each agenda group separately to assess the agenda-attention characteristics within each context (see figure 4-16). With this in place, we were able to assign each domain's priority levels - Top 25% has four, Middle 50% ten and Bottom 25% four entries. A quick review suggests that we do not have the agenda alignment at the very top or bottom end of the continuum. Unsurprisingly, we can see that *Syria* is a top priority for the government, with 128 info-flows as the conflict continues to attract global attention. However, it appears that the public is much more concerned with the *UK*'s relationship with the *USA* as its landing page has attracted 157,831 pageviews. Without tracking user's activity (which content they access on a landing page), it would be challenging to explain why the *USA* is so distinct on the public agenda.

Furthermore, if we want to assess the top entry's prominence, it is essential to reflect on the attention gap between the first and second-ranked location. The difference appears negligible in the institutional context as only ten info-flows separate the *UK's Mission to the UN (NYC)* from top-ranked *Syria*. However, the USA appears to be more firmly embedded at the top place when it comes to public attention, as a difference of 25,459 pageviews keeps *India* in the second place. Correspondingly, we could say that *India* exhibits a stronger position on the continuum (Top 25% in both agendas), albeit at different placement (#4 vs #2), while the USA is in the Middle 50% range #7 spot when it comes to institutional preferences.

| Ref. No. | SUPPLY [2015] | Info-Flows | Ref. No. | DEMAND [2015] | Page views |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WL#201 | Syria | 128 | WL#216 | USA | 157,831 |
| WL#235b | UK Mission to the UN, New York | 118 | WL#95 | India | 132,372 |
| WL#47 | China | 97 | WL#47 | China | 115,354 |
| WL#95 | India | 81 | WL#167 | Russia | 87,133 |
| WL#167 | Russia | 62 | WL#155 | Pakistan | 79,612 |
| WL#98 | Iraq | 57 | WL#73 | France | 64,586 |
| WL#216 | USA | 57 | WL#103 | Japan | 50,947 |
| WL#217 | Ukraine | 56 | WL#217 | Ukraine | 47,786 |
| WL#73 | France | 54 | WL#235b | UK Mission to the United Nations, New York | 41,269 |
| WL#64 | Egypt | 45 | WL#201 | Syria | 39,424 |
| WL#116 | Libya | 45 | WL#64 | Egypt | 39,186 |
| WL#227 | Yemen | 41 | WL#01 | Afghanistan | 26,806 |
| WL#100 | Israel | 30 | WL#98 | Iraq | 20,321 |
| WL#01 | Afghanistan | 25 | WL#100 | Israel | 17,179 |
| WL#103 | Japan | 22 | WL#182 | Somalia | 11,014 |
| WL#155 | Pakistan | 21 | WL#227 | Yemen | 9,717 |
| WL#182 | Somalia | 19 | WL#153 | The Occupied Palestinian Territories | 9,473 |
| WL#153 | The Occupied Palestinian Territories | 17 | WL#116 | Libya | 9,235 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-16**: 18 Worldwide Locations ranking order for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

When looking at the location with the least amount of agenda-attention, we have to remind ourselves that what appears to be the bottom entry in this table is at the Top 25% of the institutional agenda in terms of large-N and 2010-16 aggregated results. Therefore, in the context of our small-N and 2015, we find that the reprioritisation factor has placed the *Occupied Palestinian Territories* at the end of the institutional ranking with 17 info-flows and *Libya* with 9,235 pageviews. While these two locations do not exhibit the agenda alignment, they share the same geopolitical and geographic characteristics. We could also say that *Libya* is more of a government priority as it sits on the #11 spot within the Middle 50% priority range. The o*ccupied Palestinian Territories* are at the Bottom 25% in both groups, but in slightly different placements (#18 vs #17). On that note, it is essential to highlight that 50% of locations on this list can be classified as *Islamic* countries and while their level of the agenda-attention is more equally distributed in terms of government activity; the *British* public appears to be much less interested in this block of nations as the majority of locations occupy the Middle 50% and Bottom 25% range.

In Figure 4-17, we have listed all 18 locations in alphabetical order and placed them in apposition with the results from both agendas for comparative analysis. Even though the two agenda groups do not share the same level of attention when it comes to the first and last entry, the overall agenda alignment stands at an impressive 61.11%, as eleven locations exhibit the same priority characteristics in both groups:

- **Top 25%:** it seems that China and India are bringing the institutional and public agenda-attention into the alignment at the very top. Interestingly, while the frequency of public attention puts the *USA* and *Russia* at the Top 25%, the level of government activity means that these two superpowers are placed within the Middle 50% range. We could say that the agenda alignment may reflect changes in the international world order as emerging powers attract both groups' attention. Although it is essential to highlight that *China* has a much stronger position in this equation, as it holds the same ranking placement in both groups (set at #3);

- **Middle 50%**: is responsible for 38.89% of the agenda alignments as we encounter seven locations that share the attention characteristics. As we review the results, we can say that five of those locations belong to a single geopolitical and geographic cluster which we can define as *Islamic nations – MENA+Israel*. Such intense concentration suggests that both groups share concerns regarding the stability and security of these countries. We can also state that *Afghanistan* has the most robust agenda alignment in this group as it shares the exact ranking placement in both

agenda groups (set at #12). On the opposite end, we have two standalone locations communicating two traditional streams: (1) *France* – a *G7/EU/NATO* partner and a neighbour; and (2) *Ukraine* – an example of evolving political crisis and armed conflict;

- **Bottom 25%:** similar to the top-end, we encounter only two locations with the agenda alignment characteristics. It appears that *Somalia* and the *Occupied Palestinian Territories* share both the geopolitical constellation and reduced levels of the agenda attention. However, we could say that the alignment is much stronger when it comes to *Somalia* as it shares the ranking placement in both agendas (set firmly at #15).

We can detect two clusters' formation when it comes to seven misaligned locations (38.89%). On the one hand, we have a so-called group of 'traditional' members of the world order – *Japan, Russia, the USA* and the *UN*. On the other hand, we have *Syria, Libya* and *Yemen,* who belong to the *MENA* geopolitical region and are active conflict zones. Besides, we can only detect a 1-step disconnection between the agenda groups - though we have more (top-

| | LOCATIONS [2015] | SUPPLY | DEMAND |
|---|---|---|---|
| WL#01 | Afghanistan | 12 | 12 |
| WL#47 | China | **3** | **3** |
| WL#64 | Egypt | 9 | 11 |
| WL#73 | France | 8 | 6 |
| WL#95 | India | 4 | 2 |
| WL#98 | Iraq | 6 | 13 |
| WL#100 | Israel | 11 | 14 |
| WL#103 | Japan | 13 | 7 |
| WL#116 | Libya | 9 | 18 |
| WL#155 | Pakistan | 14 | 5 |
| WL#167 | Russia | 5 | 4 |
| WL#182 | Somalia | 15 | 15 |
| WL#201 | Syria | 1 | 10 |
| WL#153 | The Occupied Palestinian Territories | 16 | 17 |
| WL#235b | UK Mission to the United Nations, New York | 2 | 9 |
| WL#217 | Ukraine | 7 | 8 |
| WL#216 | USA | 6 | 1 |
| WL#227 | Yemen | 10 | 16 |

*Legend:* Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)

**Figure 4-17**: 18 Worldwide Locations agenda (miss)alignment for 2015: Supply-output perspective (institutional preferences) and Demand-input perspective (public attentiveness). Source: GOV.uk (*aggregated info-flow categories and data from FOI requests*).

middle / n4) patterns than the (middle-bottom / #3) changes. Overall, we could say that the level of agenda attention appears to be misaligned more prominently among the countries that the *UK* considers to be traditional allies and *Middle East* conflict zones.

Even though we have analysed a relatively small sample of 18 locations, we are confident that the applied methodology works as we were able to see the scope and scale of agenda (miss)alignment and highlight some unexpected patterns. After all, the objective of this section was to test the model and provide useful indicators and benchmarks that can help us make comparable observations between distinctly different policy clusters – which we intend to do in the following section using averaged scores formula.

### *Averaging the comparable analysis*

Thanks to our standardised analytical approach, we are in a position to compare the results from all four clusters based on eight different indicators. Also, by focusing on the percentages, we can remove a sample-size bias from the equation, as we are focusing only on the outcome and not on how many entities were responsible for shaping that result. As such, we have the opportunity to reflect on the individual samples and to create a macro benchmark for future research by averaging the results from all four samples. To help us accomplish this task, we have created a table (see figure 4-18) that lists each cluster's results in their original format/value and a section that shows the average score for each of the eight indicators.

As we have already elaborated on the individual results within each cluster, we will use this opportunity to focus solely on the average scores as we seek to understand broader patterns. Although there is no official framework that could tell us what may be expected of the level of agenda compatibility, we are slightly surprised to see that 55.37% of analysed actionable government priorities exhibit agenda alignment characteristics. While the policy areas had the lowest overall score of 44.67%, individual policies and locations have shown a 61% alignment, which is relatively high no matter the argument. Such results suggest that the alignment may be more likely/stronger when focusing on specific departments, policies or locations than when the issue is more abstract or acts as a contextual/organisational umbrella for individual priorities.

However, when it comes to 25-50-25 distribution, we can see that the Middle 50% has attracted the most alignments (32.65% on average) in each cluster – most likely because it represents the most significant number of entries. However, we could argue that such

distribution does not prevent more substantial alignment at the very top or bottom of the continuum. Thus far, in each cluster, the Top 25% had had the lowest (10.39%) number of agenda-alignments, from 7.69% with the agenda-shapers to 14.28% when it came to the individual policies. Even though the top and bottom-end patterns are relatively similar, the Bottom 25% domain's overall average score is slightly higher (12.32%). One of the key reasons we detect such low levels of agenda alignment at the top-end of the continuum is a greater diversity of actionable items – the two agendas contain distinctly different entries. As such, there are limited opportunities for the alignment to materialise. In short, this means that

| Agenda (miss)Alignment | 24+2 Departments | 47 Policy Areas | 21 Individual Policies | 18 Worldwide Locations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Aligned AGPs | 53.83% (n14) | 44.67% (n21) | 61.90% (n13) | 61.11% (n11) |
| No. of Misaligned AGPs | 46.17% (n12) | 55.33% (nn26) | 38.10% (n8) | 38.89% (n7) |
| No. of AGPs with Shared Alignment + Ranking | 23.07% (n6) | 4.25% (n2) | 4.76% (n1) | 16.66% (n3) |
| Top 25%: No. of Aligned AGPs | 7.69% (n2) | 8.51% (n4) | 14.28% (n3) | 11.11% (n2) |
| Middle 50%: No. of Aligned AGPs | 30.76% (n8) | 27.65% (n13) | 33.33% (n7) | 38.88% (n7) |
| Bottom 25%: No. of Aligned AGPs | 15.38% (n4) | 8.51% (n4) | 14.28% (n3) | 11.11% (n2) |
| 1-step Disconnected AGPs | 100% (n12) | 92.30% (n24) | 100% (n8) | 100% (n7) |
| 2-steps Disconnected AGPs | 0.00% (n0) | 7.69% (n2) | 0.00% (n0) | 0.00% (n0) |

*The average score for each category*

| No. of Aligned AGPs | Top 25%: No. of Aligned AGPs |
|---|---|
| 55.37% | 10.39% |
| No. of Misaligned AGPs | Middle 50%: No. of Aligned AGPs |
| 44.62% | 32.65% |
| No. of AGPs with Shared Alignment + Ranking | Bottom 25%: No. of Aligned AGPs |
| 12.18% | 12.32% |
| 1-step Disconnected AGPs | 2-steps Disconnected AGPs |
| 98.07% | *n/a |

*We do not have an average score for the '2-steps Disconnected AGPs' because three samples have zero value.

**Legend:** Green fields (Top 25%) – Yellow fields (Middle 50%) – Orange fields (Bottom 25%)
AGP – Actionable Government Priority

**Figure 4-18**: Agenda (miss)Alignment results for 24+2 Agenda-Shapers, 47 Policy Areas, 21 Individual Policies and 18 Worldwide Locations and combined averaged scores.

institutional and public agendas have noticeably different ideas as to what constitutes top priorities for 2015. As a result, the agenda-attention continuum is populated by too many actionable items that still wait for their policy window to materialise.

When we reflect on the extent of the agenda (miss)alignment, we could use two data signals to measure the level of intensity and divergence. First, for the aligned examples, we could say that those who share both the priority domain and the exact placement ranking in both agendas tend to communicate a more robust connection than their counterparts (12.28%). Those matches are not of equal value, as those at the Top 25% signify the much stronger potential for the policy window to emerge, while the similar match at the Bottom 25% could communicate a shared lack of interest for a particular actionable item.

Interestingly, this phenomenon was the strongest among the agenda-shapers (n6), while other clusters have exhibited much lower levels (between 1 and 3). It is worth noting that five of those matches among the agenda-shapers have materialised within the Middle 50% range and one at the Bottom 25% of the priority domain, which would suggest that the intensity of the alignment is at the level where it would be difficult to predict if the conditions for a new policy window are about to emerge or rapidly vanish. Secondly, we wanted to indicate the misaligned items' divergence level by observing the priority miss-match between the two groups. As such, we were able to say that 98.07% of such entries have exhibited a 1-step disconnection, which means that the divergence is less extreme as the movement is between the adjacent priority domains (top-middle or middle-bottom); while we have only detected two cases of 2-step disconnection within the policy areas cluster.

Overall, we feel confident that the proposed methodology has shown a capacity to utilise alternative data-chambers to establish the level of agenda (miss)alignment between institutional preferences and public attentiveness when observing the same actionable items. Even though we were focusing only on a single calendar year and had to reflect on reduced sample size, we feel assured that the methodology can be as equally effective with a broader sample and more extended time frame. Although we are confident that fellow researchers will be able to replicate our model in the context of their research, we are aware that the main challenge rests with their ability to access relevant data – especially the pageview information. However, one is optimistic that a special agreement could be reached with *Government Digital Services* when accessing large data-sets as the insights would be beneficial to both parties.

Our ability to identify the level and the extent of the agenda (miss)alignment visually and numerically has increased our capacity to determine if the conditions for a new policy window are materialising. Even though many factors will influence that process, we could argue that the agenda-attention frequency is a viable indicator for establishing if the institutional and public agendas are in sync. Furthermore, by applying the 25-50-25 priority standardisation formula, we compared actionable items that are distinctly different, both in terms of their contextual mandate and numerical values. Therefore, we can suggest that alignments at the Top 25% project stable conditions for the new policy window to emerge; while those in the Middle 50% serve as an indicator that an issue may increase or decrease in its prominence, and the Bottom 25% cluster as confirmation that the window of opportunity is either weak or that has already closed. Either way, we are confident that our test can serve as a platform for future research in this domain as we seek to utilise open and digital information to determine the level and intensity of the agenda alignment.

By focusing on the supply and demand dynamics of institutional preferences and public attentiveness to actionable government priorities, we were able to:

- Map out the scope and scale of the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* by focusing on the *Institutional Effectors* (supply-output of information) and *Public Detectors* (demand-input for information) within the realm of open and digital government;

- Align *Open-meets-Digital* construct with the agenda-setting framework by showcasing how emerging data-chambers can be contextualised and applied for decoding the frequency of institutional and public agenda-attention;

- Validate the relevance and usability of our two research currencies: (a) published info-flow as a unit of institutional agenda-attention; and (b) pageviews data as an indicator of the public agenda-attention;

- Establish key macro-benchmarks which can be used to calculate the agenda-attention-market-share of the policy clusters and individual actionable government priorities;

- Observe the level of (miss)alignment between the *Supply-output* (institutional agenda) and *Demand-input* (public agenda) in terms of aggregated agenda-attention.

Overall, we were able to experience *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* in the context of Kingdon's 'garbage can' analogy as agenda-shapers, actionable government priorities and public's agenda-attention co-exist within the *Open-meets-Digital* platform. On the one hand, we understood how actionable items and departments could change their agenda-attention

position depending on the observed time-frame and contextual association. As such, we can understand how issues can move from the periphery to the epicentre of institutional or public attention. On the other hand, we measured the agenda (miss)alignment between institutional preferences and public attentiveness to the same issues. Ability to determine at which 25-50-25 priority level we have the agenda alignment meant we could make predictive assumptions regarding the policy window. For example, if the alignment is at the Top 25%, we could say that the conditions for the *Policy Entrepreneur* (agenda-shapers) are most favourable to initiate change as both the institutional framework and public attention appear to be in sync. Equally, we could say that the conditions are much less favourable when the alignment is at the Bottom 25% or suggest that the policy window is closing. In comparison, the agenda-attention alignment within the Middle 50% area can signal that the policy window can either increase its momentum for the agenda-shaper or lose the capacity to bring the three streams together.

In conclusion, we could say that supply and demand dynamics are in a constant state of flux as institutional preferences and public attentiveness to actionable government priorities changes on an annual, monthly and daily basis. Therefore, real-time monitoring of the *GOV.uk* platform can enable both the researchers and the policymakers to be more in-tune with shifting agendas and use those indicators as early warning signals.

[49] We will be using the original data-values for each domain because it is challenging to contextually standardise a value of a single info-flow with a corresponding number of pageviews or number of visitors when we do not have access to web analytics for every single info-flow on the *GOV.uk* platform.

[50] If we take into the account that *GOV.uk* web analytics are available from March 2014 and that our research time-frame ends on 10.05.2016, it means that 2015 is the only full calendar year where we have a complete data set for aggregated info-flows and pageviews for the observed agenda-shapers and policy clusters. Also, 2015 is a critical year, both from policy and political perspective as we had a transition from *Conservative-LibDem* coalition to a *Conservative* government following the 7th of May election results. One assumes that such change has had a considerable impact on the ranking order of actionable government priorities.

[51] We have used an online *SkillsYouNeed* calculator to compute the 'annual percentage change' (last accessed on 03.09.2017: https://www.skillsyouneed.com/num/percent-change.html).

[52] As stated in *Techopedia*, a unique visitor is a term used in web analytics to refer to a "person who visits a site at least once within the reporting period. Each visitor to the site is only counted once during the reporting period, so if the same IP address accesses the website the site many times, it still only counts as one visitor": (last accessed on 25.09.2017: https://www.techopedia.com/definition/1611/unique-visitor).

[53] "A pageview is a standard unit of measure that equates to one single person loading one single web page. If a person were to sit and load the same web page 50 times, that would register in Google Analytics as 50 pageviews." from *Evan S. Porter*'s blog post '*Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Pageviews*': (last accessed on 23.09.2017: http://wordsbyevanporter.com/everything-about-pageviews/).

[54] *GOV.uk Performance Dashboard* (last accessed on 25.09.2017: https://www.gov.uk/performance). As stated in a *GDS* blog post '*GOV.UK page performance: are we fulfilling our content goals?*' (03.02.2014) "These dashboards are useful to everyone in GDS, as GOV.UK user data can reveal how people interact with government services, and how they'd like to. Data is the voice of our users - we need to interpret this language to give you what you need." (last accessed on 06.07.2019: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/02/03/gov-uk-page-performance-are-we-fulfilling-our-content-goals/).

[55] Unfortunately, *Performance Dashboards* are not available for every key menu category, department or an individual page. At the time of our research, one could only access web analytics data for the *Cabinet-level Departments* and overall *GOV.uk* platform; but not for policy areas, individual policies, topical events, worldwide locations or individual info-flows. As such, we had to file a *Freedom of Information Request* with the *Cabinet Office* in order to obtain specific pageviews data.

[56] '*How is GOV.uk performing?*' a *GDS* blog post from 23.10.2012. (last accessed on 25.09.2017: https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2012/10/23/performance-platform-beta/).

[57] '*GOV.uk releases performance data*' article on *Government Computing* website. (last accessed on 25.09.2017: http://central-government.governmentcomputing.com/news/govuk-releases-performance-data).

[58] Predicting a number of *Unique Visitors* for 2014 full calendar year - formula calculations:
March-December 2014 Unique Visitors to GOV.uk were 373,059,807 / 10 months = 37,305,980 (averaged monthly result) x 12 months = 447,671,768 (predictive full calendar year of unique visitors for 2014).

[59] Predicting a number of *Unique Visitors* for 2016 year full calendar year - formula calculations:
January – May 2016 Unique Visitors to GOV.uk were 284,962,332 / 5 months = 56,992,466 (averaged monthly result) x 12 months = 683,909,596 (predictive full calendar year of unique visitors for 2016).

[60] A press release published by the *Cabinet Office* on 14.03.2014 '*More power, more choice and better quality of public services*' - The 2014 progress report on Open Public Services shows how our reforms are giving people a choice and control over the services they use. (last accessed on 17.10.2019: : https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-power-more-choice-and-better-quality-of-public-services).

[61] Predictive full-calendar-year modelling formula for 2014 Pageviews data:

PUBLICATIONS: March-December 2014 Pageviews on GOV.uk were 8,851,161 / 10 months = 885,116 (averaged monthly result) x 12 months = 10,621,393 (predictive full calendar year for 2014 pageviews).

ANNOUNCEMENTS: March-December 2014 Pageviews on GOV.uk were 4,313,456 / 10 months = 431,345 (averaged monthly result) x 12 months = 5,176,147 (predictive full calendar year for 2014 pageviews).

STATISTICS: March-December 2014 Pageviews on GOV.uk were 927,453 / 10 months = 92,745 (averaged monthly result) x 12 months = 1,112,943 (predictive full calendar year for 2014 pageviews).

[62] *MENA* term refers to countries located in the Middle East and North Africa.

*GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace II:*

# 'Agenda-Attention Continuum' of Actionable Government Priorities

## GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum of Actionable Government Priorities

In the introductory chapter of the *Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Research*, Nikolas Zahariadis reflects on why the study of setting policy priorities is vital for students of public policy. He argues that the agenda process can tell "us something about prevalent social values at the time" (2016; p3). Equally, we could say that the attention-driven ranking process highlights the level of (miss)alignment between institutional preferences, media framing and the level of public attentiveness for specific issues. As there can never be a national consensus on which issues should government prioritise, the official agenda-list will always reflect some groups' priorities and not others (Zahariadis, 2016; p3). Still, we will end up with a list of actionable government priorities; whether they will reflect societal needs, economic trends or transboundary risks is debatable.

Nevertheless, the agenda-setting process itself can be very telling when trying to determine what social values and political norms prevail at any given time. Especially if we can contextualise and visualise how the agenda-shapers and actionable policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations are being (re)prioritised along the agenda-continuum. Such a construct can be beneficial for the researchers and policymakers as they can use *GOV.uk* data to materialise a ranking order of actionable government priorities on a daily, monthly or annual basis that reflects constantly changing institutional preferences.

From the ***external agenda-perspective,*** we can tell which issues/events have passed the intra-agenda (media – public - special interest groups) bargaining process as they move from the periphery to the core of government activity. However, we know that the actionable status does not necessarily guarantee permanence or a top priority on the agenda-continuum. Predominantly, this is because the agenda "provides an imperfect glimpse of what policy options may be adopted" (Zahariadis, 2016; p3) once the actionable item finds itself fluctuating along the agenda-continuum. As such, it is doubtful that an actionable government priority will be able to retain its original ranking status as the associated agenda-attention will be influenced, both by the external events and the attempts by numerous agenda-setters to influence its outcomes. Whether the attention-driven ranking order will be manifested in the form of (1) ***cyclical fluctuations*** (change is more predictive as it occurs in regular intervals – e.g. the budget statement implications); (2) ***sudden or extreme punctuations*** (mainly reflecting unexpected deviations in policy domain – e.g. disruptive external event or change of policy direction); or (3) ***incremental variations*** (when the level of attention is changing gradually

without major disruptions – e.g. policy or a topical event that has a strictly defined life-cycle or a ringfenced budget), depends very much on item's mandate, the level of interconnectedness with other policies/departments and the exposure to external events/influences.  As such, all these characteristics point out at formation of the ***internal-agenda perspective –*** a process that adjusts the ranking order of actionable government priorities along the agenda-continuum in response to the level of designated institutional attention. Therefore, in the context of our research, we could argue that an item's prominence on the *GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum* is influenced by the frequency of the institutional attention it receives - which we compute in the form of published info-flows (supply-output).

While the actionable status may keep an item on the agenda-continuum, it does not mean that it will benefit from a sustainable agenda-attention level during its life-cycle. As such, we can observe a formation of inter-agenda bargaining process as different departments and agencies are competing for limited resources to keep their actionable policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations at the top-end of the continuum. This tier-II agenda-setting process reflects how actionable items are in a constant state of reprioritisation as their ranking order fluctuates along the agenda-continuum in response to changing institutional preferences and external factors. Thus, we could argue that actionable government priorities, as communicated on *GOV.uk*, tend to reflect how societal needs, transboundary risks, market trends, third-party influences and international commitments are (miss)interpreted at any given time by the institutional agenda-shapers.  As such, we are in a unique position to contextualise and visualise an aggregated ranking-order of the agenda-attention continuum that reflects institutional hierarchy, socio-economic priorities and geospatial preferences of the *UK Government*.

To help us construct the *GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum* (see figure 5-1), we have established a blueprint that is reflective of our research brief and available data:

1. ***Time-Frame***: we are concentrating on the period between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016, and we are formatting data in an aggregated format – the combined number of associated info-flows that have been published within this six-year time frame.

2. ***Agenda-Perspective***: we are observing actionable government priorities in the context of institutional agenda-attention.

3. ***Policy Elements***: the agenda-continuum will contain 578 individual entries (at times, we may refer to them as 'items') associated with the *GOV.uk Policy Platform*. This means that we will establish an aggregated agenda-attention ranking order for (a)

24+2 *Cabinet-level Departments*; (b) 47 *Policy Areas*; (c) 219 *Individual Policies*; (d) 49 *Topical Events*; and (e) 237 *Worldwide Locations* in the context of their respective policy clusters. By including the 24+2 agenda-shapers into the equation, we will use the *GOV.uk* info-flows as a new research currency when establishing a perceived institutional hierarchy between departments.

4.  ***Ranking Order***: the frequency of the agenda-attention will determine the position of each item along the agenda-continuum. It means that each department, policy area, individual policy, topical event and worldwide location will be ranked in terms of aggregated number of associated info-flows. Also, each entry will be positioned along the agenda-continuum in the context of its policy cluster. The reason why we are using aggregated (2010-2016) and not annual data to compute the agenda-attention ranking order is three-fold: (1) the objective of this section is to look at the big picture, and aggregated data is most suited for establishing a macro perspective; (2) it allows us to present actionable government priorities in the context of two administrative mandates: the full-term of the *Coalition government* (2010-15) and the first year of the *Conservative party* rule (2015-16); and (3) due to inconsistency in available data, we can make sure that all five policy clusters can be analysed on equal terms if using aggregated data sets. For example, while we have annual info-flow data for the departments, policy areas and individual policies, we only have aggregated data (all six years combined) for the topical events and worldwide locations.

5.  ***Standardisation***: to make the ranking order more comparable between different policy clusters, we have decided to organise the agenda-continuum into three contextual parts: (1) Top 25% - green area; (2) Middle 50% - yellow area; and (3) Bottom 25% - orange area (see figure 5-1). By applying this formula, we would be able to observe and compare institutional priorities across the policy platform and not just within the individual policy clusters. As such, each item will have its ***agenda-attention ranking order*** (vertical flow - based on a number of associated info-flows) and its ***contextual priority*** (horizontal 25-50-25 association). While this approach will help us compare different policy elements, it will not try to equalise their policy mandates – for example, even if the *Tax and Revenue* policy area and the *NATO Summit Wales 2014* topical event are at the Top 25% of the continuum, they will continue to maintain their distinct agenda status for the respective audience. However, we will highlight that they share a common (top priority) thread regarding institutional preferences, even though they operate in different policy contexts. That additional layer of analysis is beneficial when constructing the big picture.

**TOP 25%**

| DEPT | PA | P | TE | WL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FCO | PA#44 | P#172 | TE#01 | WL#01 |
| MoD | PA#43 | P#118 | TE#13 | WL#201 |
| DBIS | PA#19 | P#101 | TE#04 | WL#95 |
| HO | PA#03 | P#173 | TE#28 | WL#47 |
| DCLG | PA#09 | P#166 | TE#27 | WL#116 |
| DWP | PA#17 | P#95 | TE#19 | WL#167 |
| | PA#12 | P#08 | TE#46 | WL#235b |
| | PA#27 | P#22 | TE#21 | WL#100 |
| | PA#36 | P#156 | TE#20 | WL#217 |
| | PA#41 | P#115 | TE#35 | WL#155 |
| | PA#23 | P#83 | TE#29 | WL#73 |
| | | P#134 | TE#17 | WL#97 |
| | | P#72 | | WL#98 |
| | | P#112 | | WL#64 |
| | | P#114 | | WL#103 |
| | | P#139 | | WL#182 |
| | | P#203 | | WL#37 |
| | | P#160 | | WL#79 |
| | | P#130 | | WL#227 |
| | | P#79 | | WL#101 |
| | | P#153 | | WL#153 |
| | | P#102 | | WL#186 |
| | | P#89 | | WL#106 |
| | | P#111 | | WL#196 |
| | | P#26 | | WL#150 |
| | | P#215 | | WL#212 |
| | | P#74 | | WL#17 |
| | | P#170 | | WL#41 |
| | | P#25 | | WL#185 |
| | | P#202 | | WL#113 |
| | | P#127 | | WL#58 |
| | | P#209 | | WL#161 |
| | | P#27 | | WL#104 |
| | | P#161 | | WL#177 |
| | | P#01 | | WL#187 |
| | | P#31 | | WL#218 |
| | | P#57 | | WL#29 |
| | | P#168 | | WL#16 |
| | | P#90 | | WL#144 |
| | | P#46 | | WL#173 |
| | | P#13 | | WL#188 |
| | | P#49 | | WL#224 |
| | | P#77 | | WL#69 |
| | | P#177 | | WL#92 |
| | | P#40 | | WL#02 |
| | | P#18 | | WL#12 |
| | | P#206 | | WL#126 |
| | | P#16 | | WL#178 |
| | | P#05 | | WL#183 |
| | | P#124 | | WL#211 |
| | | P#99 | | WL#151 |
| | | P#140 | | WL#80 |
| | | P#10 | | WL#124 |
| | | P#116 | | WL#96 |
| | | | | WL#03 |
| | | | | WL#105 |
| | | | | WL#205 |
| | | | | WL#175 |

**MIDDLE 50%**

| DEPT | PA | P | TE | WL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DECC | PA#11 | P#165 | TE#14 | WL#206 |
| DfT | PA#28 | P#138 | TE#40 | WL#06 |
| DH | PA#06 | P#137 | TE#16 | WL#82 |
| DEFRA | PA#32 | P#129 | TE#45 | WL#27 |
| DfE | PA#08 | P#155 | TE#07 | WL#147 |
| PM | PA#05 | P#142 | TE#49 | WL#48 |
| HMT | PA#42 | P#200 | TE#30 | WL#165 |
| DFID | PA#04 | P#43 | TE#34 | WL#123 |
| DCMS | PA#10 | P#185 | TE#02 | WL#133 |
| CO | PA#24 | P#20 | TE#10 | WL#163 |
| MoJ | PA#46 | P#154 | TE#23 | WL#219 |
| WO | PA#22 | P#88 | TE#24 | WL#56 |
| SO | PA#16 | P#119 | TE#32 | WL#140 |
| NIO | PA#18 | P#197 | TE#42 | WL#108 |
| | PA#25 | P#78 | TE#22 | WL#152 |
| | PA#37 | P#110 | TE#12 | WL#145 |
| | PA#31 | P#67 | TE#48 | WL#168 |
| | PA#45 | P#131 | TE#08 | WL#229 |
| | PA#13 | P#45 | TE#11 | WL#40 |
| | PA#33 | P#71 | TE#31 | WL#71 |
| | PA#47 | P#190 | TE#38 | WL#18 |
| | PA#29 | P#21 | TE#03 | WL#141 |
| | PA#01 | P#51 | | WL#19 |
| | PA#39 | P#133 | | WL#109 |
| | | P#152 | | WL#228 |
| | | P#56 | | WL#39 |
| | | P#76 | | WL#81 |
| | | P#35 | | WL#89 |
| | | P#148 | | WL#99 |
| | | P#113 | | WL#20 |
| | | P#12 | | WL#59 |
| | | P#107 | | WL#154 |
| | | P#75 | | WL#46 |
| | | P#58 | | WL#14 |
| | | P#17 | | WL#54 |
| | | P#219 | | WL#125 |
| | | P#02 | | WL#199 |
| | | P#33 | | WL#166 |
| | | P#120 | | WL#53 |
| | | P#23 | | WL#85 |
| | | P#145 | | WL#93 |
| | | P#217 | | WL#102 |
| | | P#211 | | WL#78 |
| | | P#50 | | WL#160 |
| | | P#196 | | WL#221 |
| | | P#100 | | WL#13 |
| | | P#180 | | WL#68 |
| | | P#55 | | WL#118 |
| | | P#195 | | WL#127 |
| | | P#54 | | WL#115 |
| | | P#82 | | WL#164 |
| | | P#159 | | WL#236 |
| | | P#36 | | WL#09 |
| | | P#199 | | WL#34 |
| | | P#208 | | WL#35 |
| | | P#04 | | WL#180 |
| | | P#65 | | WL#70 |
| | | P#163 | | WL#111 |
| | | P#93 | | WL#142 |
| | | P#60 | | WL#121 |
| | | P#81 | | WL#214 |
| | | P#122 | | WL#138 |
| | | P#157 | | WL#213 |
| | | P#146 | | WL#44 |
| | | P#126 | | WL#57 |
| | | P#24 | | WL#86 |
| | | P#69 | | WL#200 |
| | | P#97 | | WL#67 |
| | | P#213 | | WL#119 |
| | | P#169 | | WL#135 |
| | | P#06 | | WL#72 |
| | | P#14 | | WL#137 |
| | | P#106 | | WL#30 |
| | | P#48 | | WL#94 |
| | | P#214 | | WL#174 |
| | | P#143 | | WL#52 |
| | | P#52 | | WL#36 |
| | | P#187 | | WL#38 |
| | | P#189 | | WL#90 |
| | | P#70 | | WL#112 |
| | | P#151 | | WL#149 |
| | | P#11 | | WL#203 |
| | | P#205 | | WL#10 |
| | | P#188 | | WL#63 |
| | | P#135 | | WL#189 |
| | | P#141 | | WL#235a |
| | | P#63 | | WL#43 |
| | | P#108 | | WL#88 |
| | | P#91 | | WL#223 |
| | | P#109 | | WL#235c |
| | | P#42 | | WL#07 |
| | | P#186 | | WL#45 |
| | | P#171 | | WL#176 |
| | | P#193 | | WL#179 |
| | | P#09 | | WL#51 |
| | | P#15 | | WL#61 |
| | | P#96 | | WL#110 |
| | | P#105 | | WL#157 |
| | | P#121 | | WL#181 |
| | | P#147 | | WL#220 |
| | | P#117 | | WL#08 |
| | | P#149 | | WL#25 |
| | | P#184 | | WL#31 |
| | | P#62 | | WL#33 |
| | | P#178 | | WL#77 |
| | | P#181 | | WL#139 |
| | | P#66 | | WL#158 |
| | | P#174 | | WL#204 |
| | | P#201 | | WL#28 |
| | | P#38 | | WL#65 |
| | | | | WL#210 |
| | | | | WL#21 |
| | | | | WL#62 |
| | | | | WL#83 |
| | | | | WL#122 |
| | | | | WL#91 |
| | | | | WL#190 |
| | | | | WL#191 |
| | | | | WL#195 |

**BOTTOM 25%**

| DEPT | PA | P | TE | WL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DPM | PA#26 | P#29 | TE#05 | WL#76 |
| OAG | PA#40 | P#179 | TE#15 | WL#148 |
| AGO | PA#38 | P#61 | TE#33 | WL#120 |
| UKEF | PA#35 | P#164 | TE#36 | WL#131 |
| OLHC | PA#20 | P#41 | TE#06 | WL#23 |
| OLHL | PA#34 | P#19 | TE#25 | WL#159 |
| | PA#30 | P#44 | TE#09 | WL#222 |
| | PA#14 | P#175 | TE#39 | WL#60 |
| | PA#07 | P#216 | TE#47 | WL#114 |
| | PA#21 | P#59 | TE#18 | WL#15 |
| | PA#15 | P#144 | TE#41 | WL#117 |
| | | P#207 | TE#26 | WL#207 |
| | | P#92 | TE#44 | WL#130 |
| | | P#132 | | WL#197 |
| | | P#68 | | WL#198 |
| | | P#167 | | WL#231 |
| | | P#03 | | WL#22 |
| | | P#86 | | WL#230 |
| | | P#94 | | WL#234 |
| | | P#80 | | WL#42 |
| | | P#85 | | WL#87 |
| | | P#123 | | WL#162 |
| | | P#198 | | WL#171 |
| | | P#212 | | WL#184 |
| | | P#47 | | WL#208 |
| | | P#104 | | WL#233 |
| | | P#103 | | WL#50 |
| | | P#28 | | WL#66 |
| | | P#87 | | WL#156 |
| | | P#125 | | WL#209 |
| | | P#176 | | WL#05 |
| | | P#194 | | WL#24 |
| | | P#73 | | WL#143 |
| | | P#162 | | WL#107 |
| | | P#53 | | WL#128 |
| | | P#158 | | WL#215 |
| | | P#136 | | WL#232 |
| | | P#64 | | WL#49 |
| | | P#84 | | WL#134 |
| | | P#210 | | WL#172 |
| | | P#192 | | WL#225 |
| | | P#34 | | WL#04 |
| | | P#204 | | WL#11 |
| | | P#191 | | WL#26 |
| | | P#30 | | WL#74 |
| | | P#183 | | WL#75 |
| | | P#218 | | WL#84 |
| | | P#98 | | WL#129 |
| | | P#182 | | WL#132 |
| | | P#07 | | WL#136 |
| | | P#150 | | WL#146 |
| | | P#39 | | WL#192 |
| | | | | WL#194 |
| | | | | WL#226 |
| | | | | WL#55 |
| | | | | WL#169 |
| | | | | WL#202 |
| | | | | WL#170 |
| | | | | WL#193 |

**Legend:** Top 25% (green fields) - Middle 50% (yellow fields) - Bottom 25% (orange fields)

DEPT: 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments - PA: 47 Policy Areas - P: 219 Individual Policies - TE: 49 Topical Events
WL: 237 Worldwide Locations

**Figure 5-1**: GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum: Ranking order of actionable government priorities and the policy agenda-shapers (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

The stated framework provides us with the blueprint to construct the *GOV.uk agenda-continuum* as a three-tier platform:

1. ***Agenda-attention ranking order***: each entry's position along the continuum is determined by the aggregated level of the agenda-attention (number of associated info-flows) materialised between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016. Individual entries are displayed in vertical order (from highest to lowest) within their respective policy clusters. In order to fit all 558 entries into a single visualisation (see the previous page), we had to use reference codes and not their full titles;

2. ***Policy cluster association***: the agenda-attention ranking order is established and displayed within the contextual domain of each policy cluster: (a) 24+2 *Cabinet-level Departments*; (b) 47 *Policy Areas*; (c) 219 *Individual Policies*; (d) 49 *Topical Events*; and (e) 237 *Worldwide Locations*. In that way, we can assess institutional preferences in terms of the item's policy mandate/jurisdiction and the agenda profile; *and*

3. ***Contextual priority levels***: the horizontal space of the agenda-continuum is divided into three parts: (1) Top 25% - green zone; (2) Middle 50% - yellow zone; and (3) Bottom 25% of entries - orange zone. This approach allows us to simultaneously establish and display the entry's agenda-attention ranking order within the policy cluster and its association with the contextual priority level. As such, we can compare disparate policy elements in terms of their common 25-50-25 denominator. This standardisation level allows us to introduce a concept of shared ranking/priority value for each entry while maintaining their distinct policy mandate and agenda profile. As a result, we will observe how institutional preferences are reflected in different policy contexts at the same priority level.

In order to make the agenda-continuum findings more comparable, we will standardise our analysis by introducing a template-like approach when presenting and examining data for each policy cluster. As such, the process will be divided into two segments:

1. **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share**: the objective is to determine how many aggregated info-flows are associated with each policy cluster by formulating their contextual priority value (25-50-25). Once that is accomplished, we will be able to examine the presented data in three different settings:
   a. ***Internal agenda-attention-market-share***: establish distribution patterns by comparing each contextual ranking level with the overall number of info-flows for designated policy cluster;

b. *External agenda-attention-market-share:* establish distribution patterns by comparing each contextual ranking level with the overall number of info-flows for the *GOV.uk Policy Platform* (n122,898); *and*

c. *First and last entry:* identify entries with the highest and lowest number of associated info-flows to highlight the agenda-attention gap between two actionable government priorities that reside within the same policy cluster. We will also calculate internal and external agenda-attention-market-share for two entries to contextualise the ranking value of an individual government priority compared to the aggregated value of its policy cluster and the overall policy platform.

2. **Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries:** if we consider that we are dealing with 578 individual entries along the agenda-continuum, it makes more sense to reflect only on Top 25% and Bottom 25%, as they communicate the two extremes of the agenda-ranking protocol. Furthermore, we will also be analysing entries in the 25-25 constellation about their shared policy characteristics. For example, when it comes to worldwide locations, we will examine the top and bottom end of the agenda-continuum in terms of geographic clusters – e.g., how many locations are designated to a particular geospatial cluster; or when it comes to individual policies – how they are grouped under the contextual umbrella of associated policy areas.

Such an approach will help us determine whether individual entries in top/bottom 25% are more eclectic in terms of their profile or whether we can detect a formation of groups that have overlapping policy mandate (e.g., trade, welfare or geopolitical regions). If we consider the interconnective nature of today's policymaking, it is improbable that policy items can reside in complete isolation from their counterparts. Their mandates, profiles and jurisdictions will cross-sect at different policy implementation stages; the only difference is to what extent and with what effect. As such, we will only be focusing on more visible/stronger links when attempting to group individual entries in terms of their shared policy characteristics. For example, we may discover that policy areas relating to the economy tend to reside at the Top 25%, while the issues relating to devolved regions are congregating at the Bottom 25% end of the policy spectrum. Equally, we may determine that some policy areas will exhibit more individualistic patterns. Either way, we hope that this approach will help analyse contextual links between institutional preferences.

# AGENDA-SHAPERS: 24+2 CABINET-level DEPARTMENTS

## GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum – Aggregated-Agenda perspective
[10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016]

In the previous chapter, we have established that *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* are responsible for 94,651 info-flows. However, we did not assess how they are distributed among the individual departments regarding their agenda-attention-market-share (see figure 5-2). Not only are we reminded that these 26 agenda-shapers are linked with 77.01% of all the published info-flows on the *GOV.uk* platform, but also that those at the Top 25% of the continuum were responsible for 42,952 info-flows. This means that the top six departments are associated with 34.94% of all the published info-flows, and if observed in the context of its policy cluster, the internal agenda-attention-market-share is even higher - set at 45.37%. Such unequal distribution suggests that the agenda-attention tends to concentrate within a small group of departments that may not necessarily belong to the 'apex'[63] group, as we only

| Sample size: | 24+2 Cabinet-level Dept. |
|---|---|
| **Total number of aggregated info-flows (IF) for the entire sample (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016):** | **n94,651** |
| Top 25% IF cluster *(6 departments)*: | **n42,952** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster *(14 departments)*: | **n49,895** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster *(6 departments)*: | **n1,804** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [Internal]:** <br> *(when comparing to 24+2 Departments – n94,651 info-flows)* | **100%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **45.37%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **52.71%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **1.90%** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [External]:** <br> *(when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898)* | **77.01%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **34.94%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **40.59%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **1.46%** |
| **Highest-ranking Department - number of info-flows:** <br> **#1 - *Foreign & Commonwealth Office*** | **n11,297** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **11.93%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **9.19%** |
| **Lowest-ranking Department - number of info-flows:** <br> **#26 - *Office of the Leader of the House of Lords*** | **n8** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **0.008%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.006%** |
| **Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry** <br> *(number of aggregated info-flows / percentage difference[64])* | **n11,289** <br> **199.71%** |

**Figure 5-2:** Agenda-Attention-Market-Share characteristics for 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

encounter three out of seven members (*FCO, MoD* and *HO*) at the top of the continuum. Although we would expect top-ranking departments to command a substantial info-flow output, the gap between the top and bottom domains is rather notable.

While the Bottom 25% of departments (n6) are associated with only 1,804 info-flows, the remaining 14 departments, representing the Middle 50%, are responsible for 40.59% of the [external] agenda-attention-market-share – aggregating only 6% more info-flows than the top six departments combined. However, even more, revelatory is the extreme agenda-gap between the first and the last ranking department. At the top end of the continuum, we find the *Foreign & Commonwealth Office* (FCO) with 11,297 info-flows and on the opposite end the *Office of the Leader of the House of Lords* with just eight info-flows (see figure 5-3). A percentage difference of 197.71% suggests a strong correlation between the policy mandate and the expected agenda-attention level. Such disparity is accentuated if we consider that the *Ministry of Defence*, as a second-ranking department, has 3,738 fewer info-flows than the *FCO*. Such level of the *Supply-output* propels the *Foreign and Commonwealth Office* to the top of the government pyramid in terms of its agenda-attention-market-share (11.93% internally and 9.19% externally). The association with such a large number of info-flows is undoubtedly influenced by the *FCO's* policy mandate (maintain relations with 237 worldwide locations) and organisational framework (a platform for the vast *UK Diplomatic* network).

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Cabinet-level Department | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 13-FCO | **Foreign & Commonwealth Office** | 11,297 | **TOP 25%** (n42,952) |
| 2 | 16-MoD | **Ministry of Defence** | 7,559 | |
| 3 | 03-DBIS | **Department for Business, Innovation & Skills** | 6,271 | |
| 4 | 15-HO | **Home Office** | 6,071 | |
| 5 | 04-DCLG | **Department for Communities and Local Government** | 5,951 | |
| 6 | 10-DWP | **Department for Work and Pensions** | 5,803 | |

* * * * *

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | 00B-DPM | **Deputy Prime Minister's Office** | 797 | **BOTTOM 25%** (n1,804) |
| 22 | 19-OAG | **Office of the Advocate General for Scotland** | 332 | |
| 23 | 01-AGO | **Attorney General's Office** | 307 | |
| 24 | 23-UKEF | **UK Export Finance** | 287 | |
| 25 | 20-OLHC | **Office of the Leader of the House of Commons** | 73 | |
| 26 | 21-OLHL | **Office of the Leader of the House of Lords** | 8 | |

**Figure 5-3:** Agenda-Attention Continuum for 24+2 Cabinet-level Departments: Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries. Source: www.GOV.uk

While the *OLHL*, with 0.006% of the external agenda-attention-market-share and a narrower (legislative) mandate, is less likely to be proactive in the communicative or coordinative agenda domain. Nevertheless, our methodology and use of *GOV.uk* data allow us to visualize different power dynamics within the *Cabinet* when the institutional hierarchy is assessed in the context of an *Open-meets-Digital* construct.

Now that we have a better understanding of how the agenda-attention-market-share is distributed among the departments, it may help observe which departments share the Top and Bottom 25% contextual priority levels (see figure 5-3). To begin with, we are interested to see if relevant departments interconnect in terms of policy mandate and jurisdiction – can we detect a formation of contextual groups? As we start from the top end, we can immediately see that the *Security* mandate is a shared characteristic for *MoD*, *HO,* and to a certain extent, the *FCO*. In comparison, the *DWP* has shared a platform with *DCLG* and *DBIS* in terms of *Welfare*, *Economy, Social Mobility* and *Employment*. However, if we were asked to summarise the Top 25% entries in two words, we could say that *Security* and *Economy*, as two broader areas, are the prevalent policy mandates that define the top end of the agenda-continuum. On the opposite end of the spectrum, departments tend to be more diverse in their mandates, excepts for the *OLHL* and *OLHC,* which share the same legislative jurisdiction. We are also not surprised to see the *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister* at #21 place due to its pre-defined role and shorter mandate (it ceased to exist in May 2015). This means that the remaining three departments show less overlap and more stand-alone policy features as they encompass judiciary (*AGO*), devolved regional powers (*OAG*) and international trade (*UKEF*). Overall, we could say that the top-ranking departments tend to be more interconnected in terms of their policy mandates than their counterparts at the bottom end of the agenda-continuum.

Even though our objective is to formulate a macro agenda-perspective, we will use this opportunity to showcase how our approach is also applicable to a micro-level. Considering *FCO's* top ranking, it is crucial to show how its agenda-attention is redistributed among all info-flow types that reside within the *Publications, Statistics* and the *Announcements* collections. While the aggregated figure for the six-year time frame can help us establish a ranking order of the *Cabinet-level Departments*, it does not tell us which collections or info-flow types are more prominent for the agenda-shaper. Hence, it is essential to show how *Open-meets-Digital* methodology can highlight relevant macro-signals and provide a more detailed analysis framework. Even though we will be looking at aggregated numbers for individual info-flows, we are still observing the agenda-attention value of each info-flow on equal terms (1 info-flow = 1 unit of agenda-attention). Although we will not be ranking info-flow types in terms of their

contextual value, we will discuss the meaning of their prominence or lack thereof when assessing agenda-shapers' position within the institutional hierarchy.

We have used *GOV.uk* filter tools to calculate the number of published info-flows associated with the *FCO* department for each year in our time sample and in reference to all info-flow types separately. Once that was completed, we were able to materialise a combined table that shows all info-flow types within their collections and in the context of individual years (see figure 5-4). On the first page, we have the Publications and Statistics collection results in the context of *GOV.uk* organisational typology whereby each info-flow type was presented as part of its respective sub-category. Even though the *Publications* contain 18 different info-flow types, we have decided to combine *Open* and *Closed consultations* as a single category titled *All consultations* considering that some may have continued past our cut-off date. Therefore, we have ended up with five sub-categories and 17 different info-flow types for the *Publications* collection and just one type for the *Statistics* – the statistics itself. Similarly, on the second page, we have listed all six info-flow types that belong to the *Announcements* collection. In addition to the aggregated results, we have also calculated the internal agenda-attention-market-share for each info-flow type and its annual output to establish which category and a year are most prominent in terms of their *Supply-output* when compared to the overall FCO figures.

We start the analysis with the *Publications* category and its 17 different info-flow types. The combined results suggest that this collection is associated with 3,626 info-flows, which means that the coordinative nature of the agenda-attention is responsible for 32.09% of the *FCO's Supply-output* between 10.05.2010 and 10.05.2016. The result is not surprising if we consider broader patterns for the comprehensive *GOV.uk* platform examined in *Chapter #04*. Even though a majority of the overall info-flows were associated with the *Publications* (48.72%), we know that those patterns were not reflective when we looked at the aggregated results for *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* whose preference for the communicative-agenda has meant that their combined share for the *Publications* collection was at 39.09% when calculating the external agenda-attention-market-share (the internal was set at 43.74%). As such, the *FCO's* association with the coordinative side of the agenda-attention process appears to be much lower when compared with other *Cabinet-level Departments* and broader *GOV.uk* patterns. Therefore, we could say that *the communicative-agenda perspective influences FCO's top-ranking position*.

**FCO – Publications** *(aggregated Supply-output 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016)*

| Info-Flows | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total | AAMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONSULTATIONS | | | | | | | | | |
| **All Consultations** *(open and closed)* | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 2 | **14** | 0.39% |
| CORPORATE | | | | | | | | | |
| **Corporate reports** | 2 | 9 | 27 | 29 | 21 | 93 | 37 | **218** | 6.01% |
| **FOI releases** | 0 | 0 | 42 | 17 | 144 | 193 | 133 | **529** | 14.59% |
| **Transparency data** | 9 | 17 | 28 | 69 | 91 | 84 | 28 | **326** | 8.99% |
| POLICY & GUIDANCE | | | | | | | | | |
| **Correspondence** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 9 | **14** | 0.39% |
| **Guidance** | 9 | 11 | 17 | 421 | 194 | 683 | 138 | **1,473** | 40.62% |
| **Impact assessments** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **3** | 0.08% |
| **Independent reports** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | **14** | 0.39% |
| **Policy papers** | 0 | 14 | 13 | 34 | 42 | 45 | 6 | **154** | 4.25% |
| OTHER | | | | | | | | | |
| **Decisions** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.00% |
| **Forms** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 66 | 41 | 35 | 4 | **147** | 4.05% |
| **International treaties** | 34 | 66 | 66 | 88 | 84 | 52 | 32 | **422** | 11.64% |
| **Maps** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.00% |
| **Notices** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | **6** | 0.17% |
| **Promotional material** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 1 | **19** | 0.52% |
| **Regulations** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.00% |
| RESEARCH | | | | | | | | | |
| **Research & analysis** | 0 | 2 | 11 | 25 | 199 | 36 | 14 | **287** | 7.92% |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-Total:** | 54 | 120 | 208 | 768 | 838 | 1,232 | 406 |
| **GRAND TOTAL:** | | | **3,626** (32.09%) | | | | |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal Agenda-Attention-Market-Share for FCO (%)** | 1.49 | 3.31 | 5.74 | 21.18 | 23.11 | 33.98 | 11.20 |

| Peak-Year for Info-Flow categories | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **0** | **0** | **0** | **5** | **5** | **4** | **1** |

*\*Decisions and Regulations categories did not have a peak-year as they had zero info-flows*

**FCO – Statistics** *(aggregated Supply-output 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016)*

| Info-Flow | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total | AAMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STATISTICS | | | | | | | | | |
| **Statistics** | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | **16** | n/a |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GRAND TOTAL:** | | | **16** (0.14%) | | | | |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal Agenda-Attention-Market-Share for FCO (%)** | 6.25 | 12.50 | 6.25 | 31.25 | 18.75 | 18.75 | 6.25 |

**Legend:** Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (comparing info-flow and annual results with the overall FCO aggregated output for all six years - n11,297)

**FCO – Announcements** *(aggregated Supply-output 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016)*

| Info-Flows | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total | AAMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fatality notices** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.00% |
| **Government responses** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | **9** | 0.11% |
| **News stories** | 478 | 790 | 583 | 605 | 194 | 193 | 53 | **2,896** | 37.78% |
| **Press releases** | 476 | 793 | 580 | 456 | 601 | 388 | 128 | **3,422** | 44.70% |
| **Speeches** | 83 | 81 | 83 | 254 | 311 | 250 | 92 | **1,154** | 15.07% |
| **Statements** | 0 | 1 | 8 | 77 | 60 | 28 | 0 | **174** | 2.27% |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-Total:** | 1,037 | 1,665 | 1,254 | 1,394 | 1,167 | 864 | 274 |
| **GRAND TOTAL:** | 7,655 (67.76%) | | | | | | |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal Agenda-Attention-Market-Share for FCO (%)** | 13.54 | 21.75 | 16.36 | 18.21 | 15.24 | 11.27 | 3.57 |

| Peak-Year Info-Flow categories | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

*\*Fatality notices category did not have a peak-year as it had zero info-flows*

## The ranking order of info-flow categories (aggregated figures 2010-2016):

| PUBLICATIONS | Info-flows | STATISTICS | Info-flows | ANNOUNCEMENTS | Info-flows |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Guidance** | **1,473** | **Statistics** | **16** | **Press releases** | **3,422** |
| **FOI releases** | **529** | | | **News stories** | **2,896** |
| **International treaties** | **422** | | | **Speeches** | **1,154** |
| **Transparency Data** | **326** | | | **Statements** | **174** |
| **Research and analysis** | **287** | | | **Government responses** | **9** |
| **Corporate reports** | **218** | | | **Fatality notices** | **0** |
| **Policy papers** | **154** | | | | |
| **Forms** | **147** | | | | |
| **Promotional material** | **19** | | | | |
| **Correspondence** | **14** | | | | |
| **Independent reports** | **14** | | | | |
| **All Consultations (open and closed)** | **14** | | | | |
| **Notices** | **6** | | | | |
| **Impact assessments** | **3** | | | | |
| **Decisions** | **0** | | | | |
| **Maps** | **0** | | | | |
| **Regulations** | **0** | | | | |

**Legend:** Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (comparing info-flow and annual results with the overall FCO aggregated output for all six years - n11,297)

**Figure 5-4:** Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - detailed Supply-output of published info-flows between 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016. Representing three collections (Publications, Statistics and Announcements) and 24 info-flow categories in an aggregated-agenda perspective. Source: www.GOV.uk

That being said, the results were not equally distributed across our time frame. Although we can detect sustainable growth over the years (no negative annual punctuations), it was not until 2013 when we see a sudden increase in the overall *Supply-output*, as we see a significant shift from 208 info-flows in 2012 to 768 in 2013 – a percentage increase of 114.75%. It is difficult to speculate as to why we have such sudden change at this stage, but we suspect that it may have to do with *FCO's* migration to *GOV.uk,* which may have stabilised by 2013 as the agenda-shaper appears to be fully integrated within the platform. From that point on, we can detect a substantial increase in annual output and mark 2015 as a peak-year with 1,232 info-flows. Interestingly, we can recall that the peak-year for all *Publications* on the *GOV.uk* platform was back in 2014 – signalling yet another deviation from the macro benchmarks. Not only is *FCO* associated with fewer coordinative-agenda info-flows, but it also has a distinctly different annual-attention peak. However, when we look at the individual info-flow categories, we can see that peak-year distribution is not reflective of its macro results. We can see that 2015 was a peak-year for four info-flow types, while 2013 and 2014 were associated with five categories each. Such patterns suggest that one or two info-flow types may be responsible for most of the *Supply-output* during 2015. Overall, we can say that 2013 was probably more important from the organisational perspective as *FCO* appears to be more embedded within the *GOV.uk* platform, while 2015, with its 33.98% internal agenda-attention-market-share, was much more significant from the policy perspective.

As we move to the contextual analysis, we can immediately see how the agenda-attention is unequally distributed among 17 info-flow categories. First, we have *Decisions, Maps* and *Regulations* without a single info-flow in six years, which leaves us with only 14 categories whose *Supply-output* can help us understand how *FCO* shapes its coordinative-agenda. While the lack of *Maps* may not be as surprising, it is interesting that we do not have a single info-flow in place when it comes to regulations for such a large and relevant department. However, at the top of the list, we have the *Guidance* category with 1,473 info-flows and the internal agenda-attention-market share of 40.62%, which is rather significant if we consider that second-ranked *FOI releases* are associated with 529 info-flows (a difference of n944). However, it is the annual redistribution patterns that make this category even more insightful. While it started rather modestly with nine info-flows back in 2010, it snowballs to 683 in 2015, making it the single largest annual output for any of the categories (influencing the collective peak-year mark).

Again, as in combined result, we see 2013 as a critical year in terms of how *FCO* is expected to classify, standardise and present its information on the *GOV.uk* platform. Especially as the

number of *Guidance* info-flows dramatically increases from 17 in 2012 to 421 in 2013, only to see a significant drop in 2014 to 194 info-flows. While 2010-2013 patterns could be attributed to *FCOs* migration to *GOV.uk*, the remaining results reflect the department's mandate. Foremost, because most of the Guidance info-flow are published in the form of 'travel alerts' – updating the *UK* public and business about security risks in different countries and regions across the world. If we take into account that there are 237 worldwide locations on *GOV.uk* and the reactive nature of these info-flows (travel alert is issued when such need occurs), we are not surprised as to why this is the largest category and why it has such fluctuations in the frequency of its agenda-attention. While the aggregated results can help us establish a ranking order of the observed agenda-shapers, it is a fine detail like this that can help us conclude that the *FCO's* coordinative-agenda is heavily influenced by the external events and how the department reacts to those risks in the context of its foreign policy.

As we move down the list, we can see that *FOI releases* (n529) and *Transparency data* (n326) are responsible for 855 info-flows, making them the second-largest contextual cluster within the *Publications* collection with an internal agenda-attention-market-share of 23.57%. While both categories fall under the *Open Government* remit, they are distinctly different. The first one is about responding to public demand for information (reactive), while the second one is more about proactive transparency, as departments pre-emptively release data about their performance, activities, meetings, budgets and organisational framework.

As such, we could say that these two info-flow categories are more relevant for presenting *FCO's* open image than they are instrumental in shaping *UK Foreign Affairs.* Furthermore, if we combine *Guidance, FOI releases* and *Transparency data* categories, we can see that they are responsible for 64.19% of the *Publications* output, and yet neither of these info-flows can be associated with a direct policymaking process. Although, some may argue that the decision to issue a travel alert is a form of a policy decision as the timing and content of the guidance can profoundly impact the associated country/region and how the *UK* citizens and business perceive the associated risk. However, that still does not constitute an official policy towards a particular country that tends to evolve and encompasses many additional elements. In contrast, *International treaties* (n422), *Research and analysis* (n287), and *Policy papers* (n154) can be considered as more relatable examples of how foreign affairs are managed and executed. In total, these three categories have managed to publish 863 info-flows during the six-year time frame, which means that they were responsible for 23.80% of the *Publications'* output. We have a situation where 87.99% of the *FCO's Supply-output* is concentrated within

these six info-flow categories, while the remaining eleven are collectively responsible for 12.01% of info-flows (including three that had zero output).

As we shift to *Statistics*, we are surprised to detect only 16 info-flows during the six years. While the *FCO* is not considered a 'transactional' department *like DWP, DBIS, DEFRA* or even *DCMS,* whose mandates and activities tend to produce more statistical data-sets, we are still left wondering as to why these numbers are so low when it comes to foreign affairs? Perhaps such results are not surprising if we consider that *Statistics*, as a collection, were responsible for only 7.49% of the overall *GOV.uk Supply-output*. This number is even lower when it comes to *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* as they were collectively responsible for 4.23% of the related info-flows. We also know from our macro-benchmarks in *Chapter #04* that it was not until 2014 and 2015 that the *Statistics'* collection has shown more significant output levels. Nevertheless, in the case of *FCO,* we can see that its volume and frequency of the agenda-attention are in sharp contrast to the collective output of related agenda-shapers. With an internal agenda-attention-market-share of just 0.14% and a peak-year in 2013, this agenda-shapers undoubtedly follows a different statistical trajectory.

So, if the coordinative and statistical agenda perspectives have captured 32.23% of the *FCO's* internal agenda-attention-market-share, around 67.76% of info-flows are related to the communicative nature of the agenda-attention process. With only six info-flow types, the *Announcements* collection is undoubtedly much more proactive in its *Supply-output* than the previous two collections. From the onset, we can see that three of those categories are responsible for 97.55% of the output. With *Fatality notices* at zero and *Government responses* (n9) and *Statements* (n174) with unchallenging numbers, it becomes clear that strategic government communication drives the agenda-attention. At the top, we detect the *Press releases* category with a total output of 3,422 info-flows, which makes this more traditional form of communication responsible for 44.07% of the internal agenda-attention-market-share — closely followed by the *News stories* (n2,896 / 37.78%) as a way of communicating government's activity through storytelling and adapting the message for mainstream consumption. Lastly, we have *Speeches* by the ministers and senior officials responsible for 15.07% of the internal agenda-attention-market-share.

Even though *News stories* and *Press releases* share 2011 as their peak-year (n790 / n793), one cannot detect any clear patterns when it comes to their annual redistribution. Foremost, compared to the *Publications'* collection, we see distinctly different patterns as the 2010-2013 period appears to be much more resourceful and not affected by the migration to the *GOV.uk*

platform. Which makes us wonder whether low levels of the *Supply-output* among the *Publications* info-flows up to 2013 were due to transitional issues or were a reflection of reduced coordinative-agenda? While the *News stories* and *Press releases* appear to have relatively comparable patterns between 2010 and 2013, we suddenly see a sharp divergence in 2014 as we could detect 601 press releases and only 198 news stories in that year. Even though the objective of these two categories is the same – to communicate the government's activity/objectives – they do differ when it comes to style and audience targeting. It suggests that the drop in *News stories* may be more due to a change in communicative strategy than its due to lack of content. While at the beginning of the *Coalition Government,* the communication strategy may have favoured a two-tier system by catering to the media and mainstream audience in two distinct formats/styles, that trend appears to subside towards the end of the mandate the emergence of the *Conservative Government* in 2015.  Either way, the fact remains that the *Foreign and Commonwealth Office* appears to be more in-tune with the communicative rather than coordinative nature of the agenda-attention process.

## CLUSTER I: 47 POLICY AREAS

### *GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum – Aggregated-Agenda perspective*
[10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016]

If we start from the premise that a total of 122,898 info-flows were published by all departments and agencies residing on *GOV.uk* between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016, we are surprised to discover that the aggregated number of info-flows for 47 policy areas stands at 175,047. While we recognise that a single info-flow is not always associated with one department, topic, policy, event, or location, we are surprised to see the scope and scale of the multiplication factor within this policy cluster. As such, we can confidently say that many info-flows are associated with more than one policy area, which suggests a high degree of complexity in the *UK* policymaking (the *Perception* chapter will be focusing on this phenomenon in greater detail). At this stage, we will only concentrate on the ranking/priority order of the 47 policy areas residing on the agenda-continuum.

Although we have made calculations for the internal and external agenda-attention-market share (see figures 5-5), we will predominantly focus on the internal perspective due to the multiplication factor. As such, we can see that the Top 25% of policy areas (n11) commands a

robust 50.68% majority within this policy cluster. This means that the Middle 50% have a much lower attention distribution (44.47%) even though they represent twice as many policy areas (n25). Although the Bottom 25%, although relatively still small (4.84%), displays a much stronger share of the agenda-attention than their counterparts in the *24+2 Departments* cluster. Such patterns suggest a form of a policy monopoly, whereby 11 policy areas at the top end of the spectrum are responsible for over 50% of the agenda-attention. Which makes us wonder as to who are these highly influential policy areas?

To begin with, we can identify the top-ranking *UK Economy* with 13,946 info-flows. Such strong performance identifies the economy as the most critical policy area for the *UK Government* – something that we will test again in our *Perception* and *Potency* chapters. In sharp contrast, we

| Sample size: | 47 Policy Areas |
|---|---|
| **Total number of aggregated info-flows (IF) for the entire sample (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016):** | **n175,047** |
| Top 25% IF cluster *(11 policy areas)*: | n88,720 |
| Middle 50% IF cluster *(25 policy areas)*: | n77,844 |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster *(11 policy areas)*: | n8,483 |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [Internal]:** <br> *(when comparing to 47 Policy Areas – n175,047 info-flows)* | **100%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **50.68%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **44.47%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **4.84%** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [External]:** <br> *(when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898)* | **142.43%*** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **72.18%*** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **63.34%*** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **6.90%*** |
| **Highest-ranking Policy Area - number of info-flows:** <br> **#1 - *UK economy*** | **n13,946** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **7.96%*** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **11.34%*** |
| **Lowest-ranking Policy Area - number of info-flows:** <br> **#47 - *Financial services*** | **n560** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **0.31%*** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.45%*** |
| **Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry** <br> *(number of aggregated info-flows / percentage difference)* | **n10,737** <br> **181.10%** |

*The external agenda-attention-market-share figures require additional recalibration due to the multiplication effect of the total number of info-flows associated with 47 Policy Areas - because 52,149 of those info-flows are associated with more than one policy area. As such, in our textual analysis, we will present the results in the form of a minimum-to-maximum range.
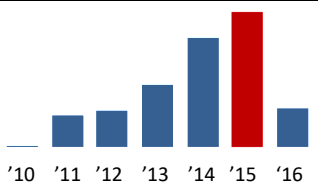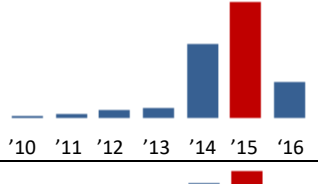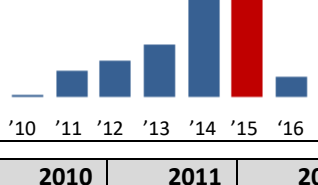
**Figure 5-5**: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share characteristics for 47 Policy Areas (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

can observe that the *Financial Services* are at the bottom of the list with 560 associated info-flows. Also, the percentage difference of 181.10% between the first and last entry is somewhat puzzling if we consider the interconnective nature between these two areas. As a reminder, in 2015, the financial services contributed[65] £119.1 billion to the UK economy (6.5% of the total). Such state of affairs can be explained in two ways, either the government does not think that the *Financial services* are a top priority, at least in the context of the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace*, which is hard to believe. Alternatively, we could say that *Financial services* are so crucial to the *UK economy* that the government prefers to maintain a status quo and keep the level of regulation, communication and oversight at a much-reduced level compared to other policy areas. Even if we disregard the economic output, we cannot ignore banks' role in shaping the *2007-08 Financial Crisis*[66], which has affected national and global socio-political-economic trends for the past decade. As such, one would expect to see much more proactive engagement in this domain and not discover that *Sports and Leisure*, not to diminish their importance, can attract more agenda-attention than the sector that can determine *UK's* economic future.

To shed more light on this issue, we have compiled a more detailed info-flow overview for both policies (see figure 6-6). In both cases, we have organised data into four groups: (1) aggregated 2010-16 results for each collection - *Publications, Statistics* and the *Announcements*; (2) agenda-attention-market-share for each collection and a combined total; (3) sparkline tabular graph indicating a peak-year for each collection's output; and (4) aggregated annual *Supply-output* for each collection in terms of 2010-2016 time-continuum. Like the previous section, we use this opportunity to showcase how one can utilise micro-data to analyse these two policy areas' key characteristics.
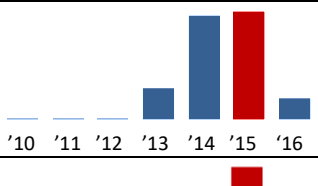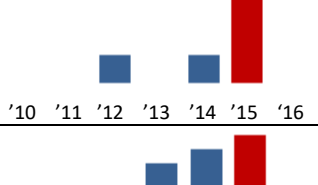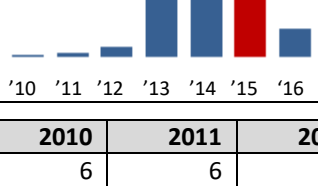
When we look at the *UK economy* info-flow data, two things come to prominence. First, we can tell that the communicative-agenda perspective is much more prominent as the *Announcements* collection is responsible for 55.89% of the *Supply-output* for this policy area. This leaves the Publications' coordinative nature in second place with 5,069 and the *Statistics* with 1,082 associated info-flows (7.76%). In terms of our macro-benchmarks, we can see a deviation of communicative prominence over the *Publications*, while the *UK economy statistics* output seems to be very much in line with the overall patterns across the *GOV.uk* platform (7.49%). Second, the peak-year for all three collections was achieved in 2015 (collectively responsible for 30.61% of all info-flows), which signals a strong correlation with the election year and change of the government while deviating from the macro-benchmarks which place 2014 as a peak-year for the *GOV.uk* platform's overall *Supply-output*. However, when we

## UK economy [#1]

| Collection | Annual Sparkline (peak-year) | Category Total | Category AAMS | Combined Total | Combined AAMS (ext) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Publications** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **5,069** | **36.35%** | | |
| **Statistics** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **1,082** | **7.76%** | **13,946** | **7.96% – 11.34%** |
| **Announcements** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **7,795** | **55.89%** | | |

| | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Publications* | 59 | 407 | 471 | 766 | 1,291 | **1,578** | 497 |
| *Statistics* | 5 | 14 | 35 | 46 | 320 | **503** | 159 |
| *Announcements* | 323 | 706 | 858 | 1,118 | 1,987 | **2,188** | 615 |
| | **387** | **1,127** | **1,364** | **1,930** | **3,598** | **4,269** | **1,271** |

## Financial services [#47]

| Collection | Annual Sparkline (peak-year) | Category Total | Category AAMS | Combined Total | Combined AAMS (ext) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Publications** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **241** | **43.04%** | | |
| **Statistics** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **6** | **1.07%** | **560** | **0.31% - 0.45%** |
| **Announcements** |  '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 | **313** | **55.89%** | | |

| | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Publications* | 6 | 6 | 5 | 29 | 85 | **88** | 22 |
| *Statistics* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | **4** | 0 |
| *Announcements* | 4 | 6 | 11 | 77 | 89 | **100** | 26 |
| | **10** | **12** | **17** | **106** | **175** | **192** | **48** |

**Legend:** Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation and a peak-year on a sparkline

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (external-facing when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – a range between n122,898 and n175,047 / internal-facing in the context of each policy area's combined total)

**Figure 5-6:** UK economy and Financial services policy areas - detailed Supply-output of published info-flows between 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016. Representing three collections (Publications, Statistics and Announcements) in aggregated-agenda perspective. Source: www.GOV.uk

analyse the 2010-2016 time continuum, we can only see sustainable growth from one year to another without any negative punctuations in the process. While the *Announcements* started with 323 info-flows in 2010, the *Publications* reached those numbers in 2011 and the *Statistics* much later in the process (2014).

However, when we observe the *UK economy* from the external agenda-attention perspective, we could see that this single policy area was associated with 7.97% - 11.34% of the overall info-flows on the *GOV.uk* platform (due to the multiplication factor, we have to present the results in minimum to the maximum range). Such an impressive number sends a clear message that this topic is of utmost importance to the government. However, such prominence comes with a great deal of complexity regarding policy implementation as this actionable government priority is attached to 28 individual policies, associated with 13 different *Cabinet-level Departments,* and its mandate overlaps with 18 other policy areas. Such configuration is a clear example where one's prominence along the agenda-attention continuum is correlated with the complex reality of managing the implementation stage of the agenda-setting process.

At the opposite end, we have the *Financial services* policy area with 560 info-flows and an agenda-attention gap of 181.10% compared to the top-ranking *UK economy*. Interestingly, when we look at micro-data (see figure 5-6), the patterns are almost the same for the top-ranking policy area. The *Announcements* command most of the agenda-attention with 313 info-flows, Publications are in second place with 43.04% of the Supply-output, but the *Statistics* show limited results with six info-flows (a zero-value output was recorded in 2010, 2011 and 2013. Equally, all three collections share 2015 as their peak-year, signalling a possible correlation with the national elections and government change. Although patterns are reflective between two policy areas, they are also telling us a slightly different story. Even though the communicative-agenda is dominant in both domains, the *Financial services* show a much higher degree of coordinative approach (43.04%) than the *UK economy* (36.35%).

We can also detect a significant shift in the agenda-attention in 2013 for the Announcements (n77) and 2014 for the Publications (n85), suggesting a change policy and communicative strategy for this vital segment. Still, that does not change the fact that this actionable government priority is responsible for just 0.31% - 0.45% of the overall *GOV.uk* info-flow output due to the multiplication factor we have to present the results in minimum to the maximum range). Furthermore, we can reinforce our claim that there is a correlation between the ranking/priority order and the level of associate complexity as *Financial services* are attached only to four policies, have an association with two *Cabinet-level Departments*. Its

mandate overlaps only with one more policy area. Such patterns suggest that policymaking complexity increases or decreases with the ranking status of the observed actionable priority. The higher the rank, the more complex form of policymaking emerges as more departments and policy areas overlap with each other.

Our approach allows the researchers and policymakers to observe both the areas that the government is keen to promote as high priority and those they prefer to keep under the radar. Again, this is a perfect example of how our methodology can be used to identify macro signals that can be contextualised by overlaying additional data variables - like we did when correlating the Financial Services' agenda-attention ranking with the economic output data expose the perception imbalance. Although such analysis is vital for our understanding of the *UK Policy Platform*, our objective is to reflect on a macro perspective and, where possible, highlight interesting correlations and patterns. Hence, way we will refrain from reflecting on every actionable item in a detailed manner.

As we start at the top end of the agenda-continuum (see figure 5-7), we can detect the formation of two distinct groups whose mandates are more closely aligned. On the one hand, we can highlight the *Economy* group with four policy areas (*UK economy* at #1, *Transport* at #2, *Business and enterprise* at #4, and *Tax and revenue* at #10) commanding a combined figure of 39,453 info-flows. On the other hand, we have the *International/Security* domain with three policy areas (*Defence and armed force* at #5, *Foreign affairs* at #6 and *International aid and development* at #11) with 22,014 associated info-flows. The remaining four policy areas are related to government efficiency, health, environment and education and tend to be more independent from their counterparts. Although we could say that the environment and education contribute to the economic eco-system, we will not attempt to align them with the economy group due to their secondary or tertiary links. Such a level of interconnectivity suggests that the top end of the agenda-continuum is focused on the economy and national prosperity.

At the opposite end of the agenda-continuum, we find 11 policy areas that appear to have much less overlap in their policy mandate or jurisdiction.  Even though the majority of policy areas do overlap, at this stage, it is difficult to determine the scope and scale of that interconnectivity by just looking at their title and the ranking order. We could say that the *UK Government* tends to designate lower levels of the agenda-attention when it comes to media, sports, *Scotland*, rural affairs, government spending, regulation, pensions, *Europe*, consumer rights, higher education and financial services. However, if we took into consideration the

importance of *Europe* (#44) ahead of the *Brexit Referendum* in June 2016, the effects of the *Referendum for Independence* in September 2014 on *Scotland* (#39), and the role of the *Financial Services* (#47) for the *UK* economy, we would expect to see much more proactive institutional engagement in these three areas, and not find them so far down the priority list. As stated previously, these results may highlight the (un)intentional agenda-setting process, which prefers to keep the politically controversial and economically sensitive issues less prominent in the *Open-meets-Digital* domain. Perhaps, we could say that the lack of the agenda-attention in those areas exposes the real agenda of the *UK Government* – to intentionally keep a low profile on specific issues, to reduce the scope and scale of regulatory oversight, to refrain from amplifying identity politics, or its inability to govern effectively?

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Policy Area | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | PA#44 | **UK economy** | 13,946 | |
| 2 | PA#43 | **Transport** | 11,167 | |
| 3 | PA#19 | **Government efficiency, transparency and accountability** | 8,845 | |
| 4 | PA#03 | **Business and enterprise** | 8,826 | **TOP** |
| 5 | PA#09 | **Defence and armed forces** | 8,316 | **25%** |
| 6 | PA#17 | **Foreign affairs** | 8,222 | |
| 7 | PA#12 | **Environment** | 7,048 | (n88,720) |
| 8 | PA#27 | **National Health Service** | 5,772 | |
| 9 | PA#36 | **Schools** | 5,588 | |
| 10 | PA#41 | **Tax and revenue** | 5,514 | |
| 11 | PA#23 | **International aid and development** | 5,476 | |

\* \* \* \* \*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 37 | PA#26 | **Media and communications** | 1,060 | |
| 38 | PA#40 | **Sports and leisure** | 1,054 | |
| 39 | PA#38 | **Scotland** | 910 | |
| 40 | PA#35 | **Rural and countryside** | 797 | |
| 41 | PA#20 | **Government spending** | 775 | **BOTTOM** |
| 42 | PA#34 | **Regulation reform** | 730 | **25%** |
| 43 | PA#30 | **Pensions and ageing society** | 715 | |
| 44 | PA#14 | **Europe** | 688 | (n8,483) |
| 45 | PA#07 | **Consumer rights and issues** | 602 | |
| 46 | PA#21 | **Higher education** | 592 | |
| 47 | PA#15 | **Financial services** | 560 | |

**Figure 5-7**: Agenda-Attention Continuum for 47 Policy Areas: Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries. Source: www.GOV.uk

## CLUSTER II: 219 INDIVIDUAL POLICIES
### *GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum – Aggregated-Agenda perspective*
[10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016]

The individual policies are one of our largest policy clusters on the continuum, with 219 entries and 71,837 associated info-flows, which means that they are responsible for 58.45% of the overall agenda-attention-market share within the *UK Policy Platform* (see figure 5-8*)*. On the one hand, we can see that the top 54 policies are responsible for 36.68% (externally) and 62.75% (internally) of the agenda-attention. On the other hand, it appears the Middle 50% (n111) is attracting only half of the institutional attention (internally - 32.96%) attributed to the Top 25% entries. Furthermore, as in the two previous policy clusters, we can detect extreme agenda-gap patterns between the top and bottom 25% of entries. We can calculate that 54 policies are responsible for only 4.28% (internally) and 2.50% (externally) of the associated info-flows at the lower end of the agenda-continuum. The prevalence of such patterns keeps reinforcing the notion of an agenda- monopoly, not just at the Top 25%, but at

| Sample size: | 219 Individual Policies |
|---|---|
| **Total number of aggregated info-flows (IF) for the entire sample (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016):** | **n71,837** |
| Top 25% IF cluster *(54 policies)*: | **n45,079** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster *(111 policies)*: | **n23,678** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster *(54 policies)*: | **n3,080** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [Internal]:** <br> *(when compared to 219 Individual Policies – n71,837 info-flows)* | **100%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **62.75%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **32.96%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **4.28%** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [External]:** <br> *(when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898)* | **58.45%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **36.68%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **19.26%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **2.50%** |
| **Highest-ranking Policy - number of info-flows:** <br> **#1 - *Road network and traffic*** | **n3,509** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **4.88%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **2.85%** |
| **Lowest-ranking Policy - number of info-flows:** <br> **#189 - *Civil justice reform*** | **n1** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **0.001%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.0008%** |
| **Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry** <br> *(number of aggregated info-flows / percentage difference)* | **n3,508** <br> **199.88%** |

**Figure 5-8**: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share characteristics for 219 Individual Policies (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

the very top-of-the-top as most of the agenda-attention-market-share appears to be concentrated only in a handful of actionable government priorities. Equally, at the bottom end of the continuum, we can see that most entries attract limited or irregular frequency of the agenda-attention. If we consider that these are aggregated figures, it is highly plausible that some policies may not attract any attention for months or even during a full calendar year. Thus, we wonder whether an actionable status is still relevant if the agenda-attention is absent?

When we looked at the policy areas, it was clear that the economy and security were predominant features at the Top 25% of the agenda-continuum and that the *UK economy* policy area was commanding an impressive top spot with 13,946 info-flows. However, before we investigate whether these patterns are also replicated in terms of the individual policy mandates, we will briefly focus on the first and last policy along the continuum. We start by identifying the *Road network and traffic* as the highest-ranking policy for the *UK Government* - featuring 3,509 info-flows or 2.85% of the external agenda-attention (see figure 5-9). Furthermore, we can see a continuous and sustainable output that stretches from 59 info-flows in 2010 to 1,440 in 2015, which also happens to be the peak-year for this policy. Again, we can see that the *Supply-output* of the top-ranking actionable priorities appears to have reached their peak in 2015 – a year when we had the national election and change of government. If we consider that transport network and infrastructure are a critical part of economic development and growth, we could say that this policy reflects the broader priority patterns at the top-end of the continuum that favour economy-related domains.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we find the *Civil justice reform* with a single associated info-flow, which is remarkable if we consider the importance of such a topic and political sensitivities surrounding any reform of the judicial system. This is another example whereby our methodology provides a platform for detecting important signals and interesting patterns that deserve more detailed analysis (see figure 5-9). As such, it may be worth our time to reflect on its key attributes and characteristics. Knowing that there is only one info-flow[67] in the equation, it was relatively easy to breakdown its key characteristics using *GOV.uk* data – we know that: (1) it was published in the form of a policy paper – suggesting the importance of the issue; (2) it was released on 23 January 2015 and that it had only one update on 8 May 2015 (the day after the elections – most likely to communicate changes to its actionable status); (3) it was launched as part of the 2010 to 2015 *Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government*; (4) it was published by the *Ministry of Justice* – the *Secretary of Justice* at the time was *Chris Grayling*, a *Conservative MP* (his mandate: 4 September 2012 – 9 May

2015); and (5) that the reform was set to address "*The costs of civil litigation [that] are too high, and are fuelled by no win no fee conditional fee agreements (CFAs). Claimants are at no financial risk when they bring personal injury claims as the risk is borne by the claimant's lawyer and the defendant.*"

Thanks to *GOV.uk* organisational typology, we were able to identify relevant open/digital data for our forensic analysis. As a result, we can make one key conclusion. The reason why the *Civil justice reform* was at the bottom of the agenda list is not necessarily because it was a bad idea. After all, the power dynamics have changed. At first, when it was presented under the auspice of the *Coalition Government*, it was launched with a policy paper suggesting a well thought out process and some political consensus among the governing parties. The fact that the *Secretary of Justice* was a *Conservative MP* indicates that a relevant political capital was in place to support the evolving nature of the reform process. However, the reason why it failed to attract appropriate institutional attention is two-fold: (1) it was published only three

| Collection | Annual Sparkline | | Combined Total | External AMMS | Internal AAMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Road network and traffic** | '10  '11  '12  '13  '14  '15  '16 | | **3,509** | **2.85%** | **4.88%** |
| **Civil justice reform** | '10  '11  '12  '13  '14  '15  '16 | | **1** | **0.0008%** | **0.0013%** |

**Road network and traffic**

| 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 59 | 208 | 215 | 176 | 937 | **1,440** | 474 |

**Civil justice reform**

| 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **1** | 0 |

**Legend:**   Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (external-facing - when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898 and *internal-facing when compared to 219 Individual Policies – n71,837 info-flows*)

**Figure 5-9:** Road network and traffic and Civil justice reform individual policies - detailed Supply-output of published info-flows between 10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016. Representing three collections (Publications, Statistics and Announcements) in aggregated-agenda perspective. Source: www.GOV.uk

months before the 2015 national elections (which ended the coalition arrangement); and (2) it was almost immediately removed from the agenda-continuum by the *Conservative Government* (8 May 2015 update suggests swift action). Such course of the events can only suggest that this policy was primarily supported by the *Liberal Democrats,* as *Conservatives'* backing may have been conditioned by the coalition arrangement and not their persuasion that such reform should take place. Again, we demonstrated how our methodology and the forensic-style analysis of the *GOV.uk* info-flows could be used to provide insightful explanations by relying only on open and digital data.

We continue our analysis by focusing on Top and Bottom 25% entries (see figures 5-10 / 5-11) to determine how many policies are attached to 47 policy areas (their contextual umbrellas). With this approach, we will assess whether the priority is correlated with the level of interconnectivity – do we detect more contextual groupings at the top or the bottom end of the agenda-continuum? From the previous two examples, we know that the Top 25% spectrum tends to attract government priorities with overlapping policy mandates, while the bottom end exhibits more individualistic policy characteristics. To help us assess these patterns, we had to go back to our master database to identify which policy areas are attached to individual policies as stipulated by the official *GOV.uk* methodology. In the process, we have realised that some policies are associated with more than one policy area, highlighting the complexity of policymaking in such an interconnected agenda space. As we proceed with the analysis, it would be interesting to see if the attachment to policy areas is more prevalent at the top or the bottom end of the continuum as we seek to establish if the level of interconnectivity is connected to one's priority status.

In order to determine whether we can detect contextual groupings based on the level of interconnectivity, we had to materialise a new table to help us calculate the links and visualise the patterns in terms of how many policies are attached to 47 policy areas (see figure 5-10). In the process, we are visualising two relationships: (1) how many individual policies are associated with each policy area: and more importantly (2) what is the priority rank of those policies – it is essential to show that policies which are attached to the same policy area, are not necessarily ranked along with the same priority domain. It will be interesting to see if the policy area's attachment factor is correlated with its aggregated ranking status.

We start our observation by focusing on policies that reside within the Top 25% priority domain. As such, we can notice two distinct patterns. First, we can see that 92 of those policies have one or more attachments with our 47 policy areas which represent 42.00% of the

| PA ref. | Policy Areas | Top 25% | Bottom 25% |
|---------|-------------|---------|------------|
| PA#01 | Arts and culture | 1 | 0 |
| PA#02 | Borders and immigration | 1 | 0 |
| PA#03 | Business and enterprise | 6 | 5 |
| PA#04 | Children and young people | 2 | 2 |
| PA#05 | Climate change | 4 | 1 |
| PA#06 | Community and society | 1 | 4 |
| PA#07 | Consumer rights and issues | 0 | 1 |
| PA#08 | Crime and policing | 2 | 5 |
| PA#09 | Defence and armed forces | 4 | 5 |
| PA#10 | Employment | 3 | 0 |
| PA#11 | Energy | 6 | 0 |
| PA#12 | Environment | 4 | 1 |
| PA#13 | Equality, rights and citizenship | 2 | 0 |
| PA#14 | Europe | 0 | 2 |
| PA#15 | Financial services | 0 | 4 |
| PA#16 | Food and farming | 2 | 3 |
| PA#17 | Foreign affairs | 5 | 4 |
| PA#18 | Further education and skills | 1 | 0 |
| PA#19 | Government efficiency, transparency and accountability | 4 | 1 |
| PA#20 | Government spending | 0 | 0 |
| PA#21 | Higher education | 0 | 0 |
| PA#22 | Housing | 2 | 0 |
| PA#23 | International aid and development | 4 | 4 |
| PA#24 | Law and the justice system | 1 | 8 |
| PA#25 | Local government | 2 | 0 |
| PA#26 | Media and communications | 1 | 0 |
| PA#27 | National Health Service | 0 | 5 |
| PA#28 | National security | 4 | 1 |
| PA#29 | Northern Ireland | 0 | 0 |
| PA#30 | Pensions and ageing society | 0 | 1 |
| PA#31 | Planning and building | 1 | 0 |
| PA#32 | Public health | 1 | 2 |
| PA#33 | Public safety and emergencies | 0 | 0 |
| PA#34 | Regulation reform | 1 | 2 |
| PA#35 | Rural and countryside | 1 | 0 |
| PA#36 | Schools | 1 | 4 |
| PA#37 | Science and innovation | 1 | 1 |
| PA#38 | Scotland | 0 | 0 |
| PA#39 | Social care | 0 | 3 |
| PA#40 | Sports and leisure | 1 | 0 |
| PA#41 | Tax and revenue | 0 | 1 |
| PA#42 | Trade and investment | 3 | 3 |
| PA#43 | Transport | 7 | 0 |
| PA#44 | UK economy | 10 | 6 |
| PA#45 | Wales | | 1 |
| PA#46 | Welfare | 2 | 1 |
| PA#47 | Wildlife and animal welfare | 1 | 0 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Priority-domain Total:** | **92** | **81** |
| | *Internal Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (comparing to n219 policies)* | 42.00% | 36.98% |

**Legend:** Top 25% (green fields)  -  Bottom 25% (orange fields)  -  No policy attachment to respective policy area (red fields) - Zero-value in both priority domains (yellow fields)

**Figure 5-10**: Number of Individual Policies attached to respective Policy Areas – configuration for Top 25% and Bottom 25% priority domains. Source: www.GOV.uk

overall interconnectivity. Secondly, we can see that not every policy area has an attachment with a policy that resides along the Top 25% end of the agenda-attention continuum. While 13 policy areas remain disconnected at the top-end, that number is much higher at the Bottom 25% spectrum as 19 policy areas show zero attachments with individual policies. Although this gap suggests that we are more likely to see the formation of shared mandates at the top, we can also see that five policy areas appear not to have any policy links, either at the top and the bottom end of the continuum. This means that *Government spending, Higher education, Northern Ireland, Public safety and emergencies* and *Scotland* appear well entrenched in the Middle 50% range in terms of government priorities.

To detect the formation of policy groups, we will only observe policy areas with more than one policy attachment. As we move along the Top 25% column, we can see that out of 34 interconnected policy areas, 41.17% of them are associated with only one policy, which means that only 20 policy areas (42.55% of the overall cluster) are showing the sign of multiple policy connections. At the very top, we find the *UK economy* with ten policy attachments (16 in total if we combine the Bottom 25% results), which reconfirms that both the frequency of the *Supply-output* and the level of interconnective complexity keeps this policy area in the epicentre of government's attention. Let us look at the top five policy areas. We can see a precise formation of the economic block as the *UK economy* (n10), *Transport* (n7), *Business and enterprise* (n6), *Energy* (n6) and to a certain extent the *Foreign affairs* (n5) due to international trade mandate are clearly, both at the top-of-the-top and are mutually supportive in terms of their mandates and jurisdictions. In contrast, the remaining 15 policy areas highlight a formation of two additional groups: (1) domestic and international security/safety in terms of its associations with the *Defence and armed forces* (n4), *National security* (n4) and *Crime and policing* (n2) and to a lesser degree with the *International aid and development* (n4) and *Climate change* (n4) as examples of transboundary risks; and (2) transactional welfare and social services when it comes to *Employment* (n3), *Children and young people* (n2), *Housing* (n2), *Local government* (n2) and *Welfare* (n2). Subsequently, these configurations reconfirm the results from previous observations, whereby the Top 25% of actionable government priorities tend to have shared policy characteristics as they form contextual groups.

When it comes to the Bottom 25% entries, we detect 81 policy attachments or 36.98% of the agenda-attention-market-share. Contrary to one's expectations, these patterns show that the level of policy attachments between the top and bottom end of the continuum is not as extensive as one would have anticipated (92 vs 81). When combined, these two priority

domains are responsible for 78.98% of all the policy links. Such configuration suggests that the individual policies within the Middle 50% priority domain are less likely to exhibit multiple attachments. It also confirms that the policies which are at the Top 25% of the continuum tend to operate in a more complex environment as they have a higher overlap index (when one policy is associated with more than one policy area). In contrast, those at the bottom end of the spectrum tend to exhibit more individualistic characteristics.

As we proceed along the bottom-end of the continuum, we could see that out of 28 policy areas, 35.71% of them have one policy attachment, which means that only 18 policy areas exhibit complex interconnectivity. If we look at the top five areas and their interconnectivity level, we can highlight the *Law and the justice system* as the most complex area with eight individual policies. The remaining four areas display a clear split between economic (*UK economy* x6 and *Business and enterprise* x5) and the security sectors (*Crime and policing* x5 and *Defence and armed forces* x5) – which mirrors the Top 25% patterns in terms of contextual groupings but not so much when it comes to the number of attached policies. For example, *Crime and policing* appear to be associated with only two at the top-end and five policies at the bottom-end of the agenda. Therefore, we could say that the attachment to a policy area does not guarantee that the agenda-attention distribution will be equal among individual policies. If we look at the remaining 13 policy areas, we can detect a much more eclectic distribution than the Top 25%. However, can still detect a formation of two distinct mandates: (1) international perspective (*Foreign affairs* x4, *International aid and development* x 4, *Europe* x2 and *Trade and investment* x3) and transactional social and medical welfare (*National health service* x5, *Community and society* x4, *Social care* x3, *Children and young people* x2 and *Public health* x2).

Even though the top and bottom end of the agenda-continuum display similarities regarding topical groupings, especially in terms of economy, security, foreign affairs, and social welfare, those patterns do not necessarily suggest an alignment. On the contrary, it only shows that individual policies can still command stronger or lower frequency of the agenda-attention regardless of their policy area attachment. The above results clearly show that even the *UK economy* policy area, which is at the top of the priority list, does not command the Top 25% level of the agenda-attention for all its policies. This also means that even when individual policies share a contextual umbrella, it is not guaranteed that each one will be prioritised at the same level, even if the policy area is a top-level priority. Such uneven patterns may suggest that an individual policy could attract more agenda-attention than a single policy area whose mandate is to provide a contextual platform for a topic in question.

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Individual Policy | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P#172 | **Road network and traffic** | 3,509 | |
| 2 | P#118 | **Immigration and borders** | 2,169 | |
| 3 | P#101 | **Government transparency and accountability** | 2,036 | |
| 4 | P#173 | **Road safety** | 1,687 | |
| 5 | P#166 | **Rail network** | 1,651 | |
| 6 | P#95 | **Further education and training** | 1,631 | |
| 7 | P#08 | **Afghanistan** | 1,402 | |
| 8 | P#22 | **British nationals overseas** | 1,250 | |
| 9 | P#156 | **Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa** | 1,223 | |
| 10 | P#115 | **Human rights internationally** | 1,111 | |
| 11 | P#83 | **Exports and inward investment** | 1,098 | |
| 12 | P#134 | **Low carbon technologies** | 1,013 | |
| 13 | P#72 | **Employment** | 983 | |
| 14 | P#112 | **Household energy** | 841 | |
| 15 | P#114 | **HS2: high speed rail** | 829 | |
| 16 | P#139 | **Maritime sector** | 811 | |
| 17 | P#203 | **UK energy security** | 794 | |
| 18 | P#160 | **Planning system** | 793 | |
| 19 | P#130 | **Local transport** | 774 | |
| 20 | P#79 | **Equality** | 749 | |
| 21 | P#153 | **Overseas aid effectiveness** | 720 | **TOP 25%** |
| 22 | P#102 | **Greenhouse gas emissions** | 705 | |
| 23 | P#89 | **Flooding and coastal change** | 695 | (n45,079) |
| 24 | P#111 | **House building** | 676 | |
| 25 | P#26 | **Business enterprise** | 670 | |
| 26 | P#215 | **Welfare reform** | 664 | |
| 27 | P#74 | **Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis** | 658 | |
| 28 | P#170 | **Research and development** | 656 | |
| 29 | P#25 | **Business and the environment** | 637 | |
| 30 | P#202 | **UK economic growth** | 629 | |
| 31 | P#127 | **Local council transparency and accountability** | 573 | |
| 32 | P#209 | **Waste and recycling** | 572 | |
| 33 | P#27 | **Business regulation** | 570 | |
| 34 | P#161 | **Policing** | 569 | |
| 35 | P#01 | **2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy** | 560 | |
| 36 | P#31 | **Central government efficiency** | 548 | |
| 36 | P#57 | **Counter-terrorism** | 548 | |
| 37 | P#168 | **Rented housing sector** | 547 | |
| 38 | P#90 | **Food and farming industry** | 545 | |
| 39 | P#46 | **Community integration** | 544 | |
| 40 | P#13 | **Armed forces and Ministry of Defence reform** | 543 | |
| 41 | P#49 | **Competition law** | 521 | |
| 42 | P#77 | **Energy industry and infrastructure licensing and regulation** | 515 | |

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Individual Policy | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 43 | P#177 | School and college qualifications and curriculum | 499 | TOP 25% (n45,079) |
| 44 | P#40 | Civil service reform | 490 | |
| 45 | P#18 | Aviation and airports | 455 | |
| 46 | P#206 | UK prosperity and security: Asia, Latin America and Africa | 447 | |
| 47 | P#16 | Arts and culture | 435 | |
| 48 | P#05 | Rural and countryside | 431 | |
| 49 | P#124 | Labour market reform | 429 | |
| 50 | P#99 | Government buying | 428 | |
| 51 | P#140 | Media and creative industries | 426 | |
| 52 | P#10 | Animal and plant health | 411 | |
| 53 | P#116 | Humanitarian emergencies | 409 | |

* * * * *

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Individual Policy | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 147 | P#29 | Cancer research and treatment | 100 | BOTTOM 25% (n3,080) |
| 147 | P#37 | Choice in health and social care | 100 | |
| 148 | P#179 | School building and maintenance | 99 | |
| 149 | P#61 | Deficit reduction | 98 | |
| 149 | P#164 | Public understanding of science and engineering | 98 | |
| 150 | P#41 | Climate change adaptation | 97 | |
| 151 | P#32 | Child maintenance reform | 94 | |
| 152 | P#19 | Bank regulation | 93 | |
| 153 | P#44 | Common Agricultural Policy reform | 92 | |
| 154 | P#175 | School and college accountability | 91 | |
| 155 | P#216 | Welsh devolution | 84 | |
| 156 | P#59 | Criminal justice reform | 83 | |
| 157 | P#144 | National Lottery funding | 82 | |
| 158 | P#207 | Victims of crime | 80 | |
| 159 | P#92 | Free trade | 77 | |
| 159 | P#132 | Long term health conditions | 77 | |
| 160 | P#68 | Education in developing countries | 76 | |
| 161 | P#167 | Regional Growth Fund | 71 | |
| 162 | P#03 | Financial services | 70 | |
| 162 | P#86 | Farming industry regulation | 70 | |
| 163 | P#94 | Freshwater fisheries | 69 | |
| 164 | P#80 | European funds | 68 | |
| 165 | P#85 | Family justice system | 65 | |
| 166 | P#123 | Knife, gun and gang crime | 62 | |
| 167 | P#198 | The Commonwealth | 61 | |
| 168 | P#212 | Water industry | 58 | |
| 169 | P#47 | Company law reform | 56 | |
| 169 | P#104 | Health and safety reform | 56 | |
| 170 | P#103 | Harmful drinking | 55 | |
| 171 | P#28 | Business tax reform | 54 | |

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Individual Policy | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 172 | P#87 | Financial services regulation | 53 | |
| 173 | P#125 | Legal aid reform | 52 | |
| 173 | P#176 | School and college funding | 52 | |
| 173 | P#194 | Support for families | 52 | |
| 174 | P#73 | End of life care | 47 | |
| 174 | P#162 | Postal service reform | 47 | |
| 175 | P#53 | Consumer credit market | 38 | |
| 175 | P#158 | Piracy off the coast of Somalia | 38 | |
| 176 | P#136 | Management of the European Regional Development Fund | 36 | |
| 177 | P#64 | Economic development in coastal and seaside areas | 34 | |
| 178 | P#84 | Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination | 32 | **BOTTOM 25%** |
| 178 | P#210 | Water and sanitation in developing countries | 32 | (n3,080) |
| 179 | P#192 | State Pension age | 31 | |
| 180 | P#34 | Children outside mainstream education (alternative provision) | 30 | |
| 181 | P#204 | UK nuclear deterrent | 29 | |
| 182 | P#191 | Stability in the Western Balkans | 27 | |
| 183 | P#30 | Carers' health | 26 | |
| 184 | P#183 | Sexual violence in conflict | 20 | |
| 184 | P#218 | Young offenders | 20 | |
| 185 | P#98 | Government as a Platform | 15 | |
| 186 | P#182 | Sentencing reform | 14 | |
| 187 | P#07 | Administrative justice reform | 13 | |
| 188 | P#150 | Nuclear disarmament | 5 | |
| 189 | P#39 | Civil justice reform | 1 | |

**Figure 5-11**: Agenda-Attention Continuum for 219 Individual Policies: Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries.
Source: www.GOV.uk

## CLUSTER III: 49 TOPICAL EVENTS
### GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum – Aggregated-Agenda perspective
[10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016]

In the process of formulating the *GOV.uk Policy Platform*, we were able to identify 49 *Topical Events* that were launched within our research time frame. Our main selection criteria were the 'activation' date - as long as the event was officially launched on *GOV.uk* between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016, it was considered an actionable government priority because we were not concerned whether their life-cycle expired before or after the cut-off date. This policy cluster is slightly unusual due to the temporal nature of the associated agenda-attention. Unlike other items along the continuum, these events have a clearly defined life-cycle and a very focused policy mandate. Although most of the events appear to be planned ahead of time, especially when it comes to historic anniversaries, international summits and budget statements, some are more reactive as they are linked to the government's response to unexpected transboundary risks and humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not every conference, topic, anniversary or natural disaster will benefit from such amplification. As such, these events can help us analyse what government deems to be worthy of such a high-profile status on *GOV.uk* – is the emphasis on international or domestic issues; are they pre-planned or reactive to the external events; is it about ceremonial choreography or policy intervention; and whether they are one-off experience or a cyclical annual feature on the agenda calendar?

Even though *Topical Events* explore, celebrate and communicate different topics, the majority of the agenda-attention tends to occur around the launch date when the agenda-amplification effect is at its strongest. As such, we can expect to see a four-stage agenda-attention pattern on display: (1) gradual build-up of the momentum – a designated webpage is launched on *GOV.uk,* and the event is listed under the active policies section; (2) amplified activity around the launch date when the largest number of info-flows are materialised; (3) as the event concludes we can see a significant decline in the frequency of agenda-attention as the amplification is no longer applied; and (4) eventually the event is 'archived,' both in terms of its actionable status (it has served its purpose) and its visibility on *GOV.uk* (designated webpage, although still accessible, is no longer updated as no new info-flows are associated with the event).

However, if we observe them from the agenda-attention perspective, we can see that 49 *Topical Events* are associated with only 2,146 info-flows (1.74% of the external agenda-

attention-market-share). This is a relatively small number if we consider that some individual departments, policy areas, or policies could single-handedly attract more agenda-attention than 49 events combined (see figure 5-12). *Topical Events* have a limited policy life-cycle and cover a wide array of topics – from international summits, referendums, historic anniversaries, humanitarian crisis response, policy launches and budget statements – we can assume that there are limitations as to how much agenda-attention can be designated to each event.

Even though we are dealing with a relatively small number of info-flows, this does not mean that the agenda-attention frequency is equally spread among the events. On the contrary, we probably have the most extreme divergence among the priority ranks. To begin with, the Top 25% of the events (n12) are responsible for an astounding 63.93% of the info-flows (n1,372), which means that the remaining 37 items account for 36.07% of the *Supply-output* – divided between the Middle 50% (n659) and the Bottom 25% (n115). As expected, the very top-of-the-top are disproportionately more influential than the remaining 75% of the events.

| Sample size: | 49 Topical Events |
|---|---|
| **Total number of aggregated info-flows (IF) for the entire sample (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016):** | **n2,146** |
| Top 25% IF cluster *(12 topical events)*: | **n1,372** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster *(23 topical events)*: | **n659** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster *(14 topical events)*: | **n115** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [Internal]:** <br> *(when comparing to 49 Topical Events – n2,146 info-flows)* | **100%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **63.93%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **30.70%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **5.35%** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [External]:** <br> *(when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898)* | **1.74%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **1.11%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **0.53%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **0.09%** |
| **Highest-ranking Topical Event - number of info-flows:** <br> #1 - *UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit)* <br> #1 - *Scottish independence referendum* | **n167** (x2 = n334) <br> *shared number one spot* |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **7.78%** (x2 = 15.56%) |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.13%** (x2 = 0.27%) |
| **Lowest-ranking Topical Event - number of info-flows:** <br> #36 - *Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients* <br> #36 - *UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017* | **n2** <br> *shared last entry* |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **0.18%** (x2 = 0.09%) |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.003%** (x2 = 0.001%) |
| **Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry** <br> *(number of aggregated info-flows / percentage difference)* | **n166** <br> **197.61%** |

**Figure 5-12**: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share characteristics for 49 Topical Events (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

However, when we look at them from the external agenda-attention perspective, those internal distributions are not that relevant because not a single *Topical Event* was able to command a strong agenda-value when compared to its counterparts in other policy clusters (e.g., bottom 14 events account for only 0.09% of all the info-flows). Even if we observe them as a cluster of 49 actionable government priorities, their external agenda-attention-market-share of 1.4% is somewhat limited when comparing the *Individual Policies* cluster (58.45%) or the top-ranking agenda shaper (*FCO* = 9.19%). On the one hand, the 1.11% agenda-attention-market-share of the top 12 events is not dismissive; on the other hand, their influence is somewhat limited due to their short life-cycle and temporal agenda legacy.

Nevertheless, our ability to identify the frequency of the institutional agenda-attention is a valuable contribution to the research as these events represent a unique insight into how the government sets and amplifies the agenda process. While their ability to influence a long-term policy process is restricted, their capacity to propel an issue and capture short-term public and media attention is much stronger as they become a critical tool for government strategic communication. Hence, they need to be analysed as 'temporal' agenda items – actionable government priorities whose objective is to amplify a particular issue within the strictly defined time-frame by targeting the media, epistemic communities, and the mainstream audience.

When we look at the top and bottom ranking event, divergence is even more apparent, both in terms of designated agenda-attention and topical priorities. At the top, we find two events that co-share the number one spot, the *UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit)* and *Scottish independence referendum,* each with 167 info-flows, which means that just two *Topical Events* are responsible for 15.56% of the internal and 0.27% of the external agenda-attention-market-share. While at the bottom of the list, we also encounter co-sharing patterns as *Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients* and the *UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017* are responsible for two info-flows each, or 0.18% of the combined internal and 0.003% external agenda-attention-market-share.

While such extremes between the top and bottom ranking items (percentage difference of 197.61%) on the agenda-continuum are no longer surprising, we are curious about how such dissimilar topics are co-sharing the same level of the agenda-attention. Perhaps slightly less so when we look at the bottom-ranked entries, they were both still classified as 'active' events (their peak date was outside our research time-frame). As such, we can expect that they will be associated with more info-flows as the key dates approach, although not at the scope and

the scale that would make dramatic changes to their status as both events are more ceremonial (culture of remembrance) and promotional (public diplomacy – *UK* image abroad) in their nature.

On the other hand, we are curious about how the UK Presidency of the *G8 2013* (*G8 dementia summit)[68]* and 2014 *Scottish independence referendum[69]* are receiving the same level of the agenda-attention, considering that the future of the union was at stake. We cannot account for all the reasons for such state of affairs, but we can provide additional context by forensically analysing open and digital data. As each *Topical Event* has its own specially designated web page on *GOV.uk*, we can identify numerous data-points that can help researchers build a better understanding as to why a specific event is designated the 'topical' status, what are its policy/communication objectives, how long is its life-cycle, which department is in charge and ultimately compute, both the type and frequency of designated agenda-attention. Even though we cannot assess the top two events in greater detail, we can provide particular insights that can help build our understanding of why dementia and the union's future share the same spot. To help us accomplish the task, we were able to identify eight helpful data points and present them in a table format to analyse these two events (see figure 5-13).

| Data-Point: | #1 - UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit) | #1 - Scottish independence referendum |
|---|---|---|
| **Leading Department/s** | **DFID – CO – DH** | **SO** |
| **Type of 'Topical Event'** | **International** (G8 topical summit) | **National** (independence referendum) |
| **Actionable Status** | **Archived** (launched and deactivated within our research time-frame) | **Archived** (launched and deactivated within our research time-frame) |
| **Life-Cycle** *(number of days)* | **1,321 days** | **730 days** |
| **First Info-Flow** *(type/date)* | **27.05.2011** *(announcement)* | **18.09.2013** *(announcement)* |
| **Last Info-Flow** *(type/date)* | **08.01.2015** *(announcement)* | **18.09.2015** *(announcement)* |
| **Number of Publications** | **21** (12.57%) | **32** (19.16%) |
| **Number of Announcements** | **146** (87.43%) | **135** (80.84%) |
| **Total number of Info-Flows** | **167** | **167** |

**Figure 5-13**: UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit) and Scottish independence referendum topical events – key characteristics and Supply-output data in an aggregated-agenda perspective. Source: www.GOV.uk

We will first focus on characteristics that these two polar opposite *Topical Events* share regarding their agenda-amplification protocol. In addition to being at the top of the list with 167 info-flows each, their starting and concluding info-flow type was from the *Announcement* collection. When we break down these numbers, we can see that the emphasis was on communicative-agenda as 80%+ of info-flows for both events represent the communicative-agenda (most likely press releases, speeches and news stories). Although, we can see that the *G8 summit 2013* was much more robust in this domain as 87.43% of its info-flows were communicative. Such distribution leaves the *Publications* collection below the 20% mark for both events. However, one has to note that the coordinative-agenda frequency was much higher for the Scottish referendum (19.16%) than the *G8 summit 2013* with its 21 info-flows (12.57%). Even though the emphasis on the communicative-agenda at the top-of-the-top is in line with previous policy clusters, these two examples show much stronger alignment with the *Announcements* collection than any other policy cluster. Such evidence only reconfirms our initial assumption that, when it comes to *Topical Events*, the institutional agenda-attention is overwhelmingly manifested in the form of strategic communication.

Considering the importance of the *Scottish independence referendum* for the state of the union, one would expect a higher degree of interconnective complexity in terms of departmental oversight. Contrary to our expectation, this event shows association with only one *Cabinet-level Department* – the *Scotland Office* itself. This is not to say that other departments were not involved, but it emphasises the political decision to designate a symbolic department with a mandate for such an important issue. On the other hand, the *G8 dementia summit* shows a sign of coordinative complexity as we detect the involvement of *DFID, CO* and *DH* departments. Such combination suggests that the *Cabinet Office* was probably tasked with executing the event itself while *DFID* and *DH* with the post-implementation strategy about *Dementia* within their respective mandates (international/domestic).

The two events also differ in terms of their geopolitical association – the *G8 summit* is more international, although the challenges posed by *Dementia* also affect domestic health policy (hence the *DH* presence). Simultaneously, the *Scottish Referendum* is a domestic affair with potential transboundary effects. While both *Topical Events* are classified as an 'archived' event, which means that their start and end date was writing our observed time-frame, they have distinctly different life-cycles. Interestingly, the *G8 summit* is both at the number one spot regarding its agenda-attention and the life-cycle (1,321 days). By establishing when the first and last associated info-flow was published, we established a more accurate life-cycle for

each event on our list. As such, we find the *Scottish referendum* much lower down the continuum with its 730 days, but still very much within the Top 25% priority rank. Even though they are separated by 590 days, one would not expect a more balanced life-cycle because their objectives and mandates were very different and were governed by a different set of rules. While the *G8 summit* was the opportunity to show the importance of *UK* diplomacy on the international stage and focus more on the legacy, the *Scottish referendum* was once a generation event governed by the strict regulatory framework.

To determine if the Top 25% and Bottom 25% priority domains tend to attract the events that are more relatable in terms of their mandate, we have decided to organise the analysis into two parts (see figure 5-14). Firstly, we want to determine if the events are more international or domestic in their policy context – who is the primary beneficiary or the audience. Secondly, we would look at the event profile to clarify which ones focus on policy issues and which ones are more ceremonial in their character. As we start with the Top 25% domain, we can immediately see that the events with domestic agenda (n7) are much more prevalent as 58.33% of published info-flows tend to be associated with these mandates. Although it is important to note that some of the events cater to both domains at different degrees, it is hard to make 100% accurate classifications. However, even with this in mind, we can say that the top-end of the temporal continuum is much more focused on the domestic agenda.  We encounter a similar pattern at the Bottom 25% end as 50.00% of the events focus on national issues. However, we cannot say that the domestic agenda is an overwhelming majority at the top and the bottom end of the continuum as the percentage gap between the two domains is not that wide, plus many *Topical Events* tend to cross-sect both the international and domestic agenda. For example, the *First World War Centenary* is a transboundary event as it remembers an international conflict in the *UK* context.

In terms of the mandate, we get much more variety as the events address an eclectic range of issues. To help us with the analysis, we have designated several broader categories which can act as contextual umbrellas for most of these events. When looking at the top-end of the continuum, we can detect the following configuration:

- Budget statements:               5 events
- Government response to a crisis:  3 events
- International summits:            2 events
- Referendum:                      1 event
- Culture of Remembrance:          1 event

From this perspective, we could say that the government tends to use *Topical Events* as a platform when presenting and communicating budget statements (n5). Due to the sensitive nature of the annual statements, it is understandable why more agenda-attention is given to these events. In comparison, the second group reflects the 'reactive' nature of the government's agenda-setting process as they are expected to respond to risks and crisis as they occur. In this case, a combination of international health pandemic (*Ebola*), security risks posed by *DAESH* and response to UK-based flooding has propelled these three events to the

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Topical Event | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TE#01 | **UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit)** | 167 | |
| 1 | TE#13 | **Scottish independence referendum** | 167 | |
| 2 | TE#04 | **First World War Centenary** | 166 | |
| 3 | TE#28 | **Ebola virus: UK government response** | 163 | |
| 4 | TE#27 | **Daesh: UK government response** | 138 | **TOP** |
| 5 | TE#19 | **Budget 2014** | 99 | **25%** |
| 6 | TE#46 | **Winter flooding 2015 to 2016: community support** | 94 | |
| 7 | TE#21 | **Budget 2016** | 81 | **(n1,372)** |
| 8 | TE#20 | **March Budget 2015** | 78 | |
| 9 | TE#35 | **Summer Budget 2015** | 77 | |
| 10 | TE#29 | **Autumn Statement 2014** | 73 | |
| 11 | TE#17 | **NATO Summit Wales 2014** | 69 | |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | TE#05 | **Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council** | 12 | |
| 28 | TE#15 | **London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014** | 12 | |
| 29 | TE#33 | **Election 2015** | 12 | |
| 30 | TE#36 | **Queen's Speech 2015** | 11 | |
| 31 | TE#06 | **Autumn Statement 2012** | 10 | |
| 31 | TE#25 | **Queen's Speech 2014** | 10 | **BOTTOM** |
| 32 | TE#09 | **UK Presidency of G7 2013** | 9 | **25%** |
| 32 | TE#37 | **Bastion Memorial Dedication** | 9 | |
| 32 | TE#39 | **Battle of the Somme Centenary** | 9 | **(n115)** |
| 33 | TE#18 | **London Conference on Afghanistan 2014** | 7 | |
| 34 | TE#47 | **National Apprenticeship Awards 2016** | 6 | |
| 35 | TE#41 | **Youth Summit 2015** | 4 | |
| 36 | TE#26 | **Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients** | 2 | |
| 36 | TE#44 | **UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017** | 2 | |

**Figure 5-14**: Agenda-Attention Continuum for 49 Topical Events: Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries. Source: www.GOV.uk

top of the temporal-agenda. While the remaining 33.33% of the events in this priority domain are focused on the *UK*'s role in hosting *G8/NATO* summits (n2), executing the *Scottish independence referendum* and acknowledging the *First World War Centenary*.

The picture is slightly different at the Bottom 25% of the agenda-attention continuum as we encounter a more diverse categorisation:

- International summits:        4 events
- Budget / Queen's Speech:      3 events
- Culture of Remembrance:       3 events
- Youth / Employment:           2 events
- Election:                     1 event
- UK public diplomacy:          1 event

Foremost, we have more international-focused summits (n4) and no government responses to the crisis. In contrast to the Budget and Queen's Speech (n3), which are cyclical events on the agenda calendar, international summits tend to rotate among the member countries, and responses to transboundary crises are highly unpredictable affairs. We also encounter three events relating to *World War* anniversaries, mainly because our time-frame coincides with the centenary celebrations. However, their lower-ranking suggests either that these events were still 'active' or that they tend to receive limited but highly concentrated frequency of the agenda-attention around the actual anniversary day. Considering the importance of a 2015 national election for the government and the nation, we are slightly surprised to see it at number 29 ranking order with just 12 info-flows. While we can understand why the *UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017* as an 'active' event, which is yet to generate more info-flows is at the bottom of the list; the lack of info-flows also suggests that *National Apprenticeship Awards 2016* and *Youth Summit 2015* were never a high priority for the government, even though they were awarded a topical status.

Overall, we could say that our Open-meets-Digital methodology to switch from macro to micro analysis allows us to detect essential signals and highlight interesting patterns. We seek to explain why specific, actionable government priorities are at the epicentre of institutional attention and others are not. While the macro-perspective allows us the asses the scope/scale of the observed domain and visualise areas of interest, the micro-data analysis provides us with additional clarifications and contexts which can help us build a more holistic picture of the agenda-attention continuum. Also, by unveiling the *Topical Events* data, we were able to show how government prioritises which anniversaries, conferences, and crisis get to be given this status; a majority do not qualify for this level of agenda-amplification.

# CLUSTER IV: 237 WORLDWIDE LOCATIONS
## GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum – Aggregated-Agenda perspective
[10 May 2010 – 10 May 2016]

This policy cluster is by far the amplest element on the continuum as it is populated with 237 worldwide locations, ranging from the largest countries in terms of their landmass like *Canada* to those with the biggest population like *China*, all the way down to small island-states like *St Martin*. We should also note that the government lists its membership to international organisations and unions with the *UN, NATO, OECD, EU, OSCE, the Commonwealth* and the *Council of Europe* under the worldwide category. Overall, it means that the agenda-attention continuum reflects how the *UK Government* ranks and prioritises its relationship with so many different countries, unions and organisations. Our ability to establish an aggregated ranking order will allow us to correlate the priority ranking with the geospatial and geopolitical context that each location brings into the equation. While those relationships will be examined in

| Sample size: | 237 Worldwide Locations |
|---|---|
| **Total number of aggregated info-flows (IF) for the entire sample (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016):** | **n15,335** |
| Top 25% IF cluster *(59 locations)*: | **n10,788** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster *(119 locations)*: | **n4,181** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster *(59 locations)*: | **n366** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [Internal]:** <br> *(when comparing to 237 Worldwide Locations – n15,335 info-flows)* | **100%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **70.34%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **27.26%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **2.38%** |
| **Agenda-Attention-Market-Share [External]:** <br> *(when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898)* | **12.47%** |
| Top 25% IF cluster: | **8.77%** |
| Middle 50% IF cluster: | **3.40%** |
| Bottom 25% IF cluster: | **0.29%** |
| **Highest-ranking Location - number of info-flows:** <br> **#1 - *Afghanistan*** | **n700** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **4.56%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0.56%** |
| **Lowest-ranking Location - number of info-flows:** <br> **#111 - *Saint-Barthélemy*** <br> **#111 - *St Martin*** | **n0** <br> *shared last-place* |
| Attention-Market-Share *(Internal)* | **0%** |
| Attention-Market-Share *(External)* | **0%** |
| **Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry** <br> *(number of aggregated info-flows / percentage difference)* | **n700** <br> **200%** |

**Figure 5-15**: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share characteristics for 237 Worldwide Locations (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016). Source: www.GOV.uk

greater detail in our *Proximity* chapter, we will use this opportunity to focus on the agenda-attention-market-share and the composition of the top and bottom end of our continuum (see figure 5-15).

Even though this cluster contains the largest number of actionable government priorities (n237), it is associated with a considerably smaller number of info-flows than the agenda-shapers, policy areas or individual policies, as we were able to count a total of 15,335 info-flows. First, we can see a recurring pattern at the Top 25% domain, whereby 59 locations are responsible for most published info-flows (n10,788). In terms of the internal agenda-attention-market-share, those figures suggest that top-ranking locations monopolise 70.34% of the agenda-attention within the cluster itself. Equally, these patterns suggest that 59 locations are associated with 8.77% of overall GOV when observing from the external perspective.*uk Supply-output*. Such disproportionate sway from the top-end means that the remaining 178 locations are responsible for just 4,547 info-flows – with the Middle 50% accounting for the majority (n4,181) and the Bottom 25% (n59) attracting only 2.38% of the internal and 0.29% of the external agenda-attention-market-share (n366). Such unequal redistribution of the agenda-attention suggests that the government is intensely focusing only on the top-tier locations, either because of its long term geopolitical and economic strategy or in response to transboundary risks, conflict and humanitarian crisis that are associated with those countries. While some locations may be at the epicentre of government's attention due to the complex nature of their problems/potentials, which bring into the mix the geopolitical context, economic opportunities and responses to transboundary risks; the *UK Government* probably has a much less intense agenda-attention with a majority of the countries, while few are entirely off the radar (see figure 5-17 and 5-18).

When we look at the first and last entry along the continuum, we could see that *Afghanistan* is at number one spot with 700 info-flows, while *Saint-Barthélemy* and *St Martin* share the last place with zero info-flows. Foremost, we are not surprised by the results, mainly as *Afghanistan* was prominent on the agenda since 2001 until the withdrawal of *British* troops from the country in 2014[70]; while one can hardly expect that the two small *French*-speaking island-states in the *Caribbean* are going to attract a significant frequency of the *UK* agenda-attention, unless in time of humanitarian crisis. Although *Afghanistan* is firmly at the top, if we examine its annual redistribution, it becomes clear that the agenda-attention frequency was not as sustainable as one would expect for a top-ranking location (see figure 5-16).

The ability to switch from aggregated ranking results to annual agenda-attention distribution allows us to examine if an actionable item exhibits 'muddling through patterns, sustainable growth, constant fluctuations or rapid decline in institutional agenda-attention. Therefore, our approach can help us establish a big-picture while highlighting data signals and patterns, which can provide researchers with valuable insights as we seek to form a more holistic picture. On the one hand, the aggregated ranking placement reflects a cumulative agenda-attention spanning between 2010 and 2016, and as such, it will always remain a control variable if we seek to understand long-term government priorities. On the other hand, annual and monthly *Supply-output* data allows us to monitor how institutional preferences change within the observed time frame. Therefore, sudden positive or negative punctuations will send a clear signal that a particular month or a year was critical in the process and therefore deserving of our detailed attention.

This brings us to the *Afghanistan* case, as a perfect example of how changing institutional preferences can provide us with a different annual outlook even though the location can retain a number one spot in the context of an aggregated-agenda perspective (see figure 5-16).

**AFGHANISTAN [#1]**

|  | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aggregated Info-Flows** | 107 | 156 | 109 | **194** | 101 | 25 | 8 |

**Total: 700** (internal AAMS – 4.56%  / external AAMS – 0.56%)

**PUBLICATIONS:**           **55** info-flows (7.85% of the location's supply-output)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**        **645** info-flows (92.14% of the location's supply-output)

**SYRIA [#2]**

|  | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aggregated Info-Flows** | 4 | 70 | 126 | **179** | 102 | 128 | 67 |

**Total: 676** (internal AAMS – 4.40%  / external AAMS – 0.55%)

**PUBLICATIONS:**           **22** info-flows (3.25 of the location's supply-output)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**        **654** info-flows (96.74% of the location's supply-output)

**Legend:**    Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (external-facing - when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898 and *internal-facing when compared to 237 worldwide locations – n15,335 info-flows)*

**Figure 5-16:** Worldwide locations policy cluster – Afghanistan (#1) and Syria's (#2) annual redistribution of info-flows (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016) and contextual association with Publications and the Announcements. Source: www.GOV.uk

Foremost we have to acknowledge that *Afghanistan* was high on the *UK* agenda since 2001[71], but since our records started in 2010, we observe the latter part of its agenda-attention life-cycle. While we can detect sustainable agenda-attention growth in the first two years, we can also see negative punctuation as the attention dropped from 156 to 109 info-flows in 2012. However, that changes rather quickly as we see a rapid increase to 194 info-flows in 2013, which also happens to be the peak-year for this location. From that point on, we can observe a rapid decline in the attention as *British* troops withdrew in 2014. In two years, *Afghanistan* had shifted from its peak-year attention to just 25 info-flows in 2015. Such patterns show how rapidly institutional preferences can change once the military/security component is taken out of the policy equation.

Furthermore, if we briefly focus on the number two spot, we can see how *Syria* is replacing *Afghanistan* as the epicentre of *UK* foreign policy (see figure 5-16). With its 676 info-flows, *Syria* is not that far removed from the top spot, but it is the annual frequency change that is most interesting as it clearly shows how the attention is being redistributed between the two locations. At first, *Syria* was almost off the radar back in 2010 with its four info-flows, which is not surprising if we consider that the conflict did not officially start until 15 March 2011[72]. However, as the intensity of civil war becomes evident, it is the frequency of the associated agenda-attention, as we detect 70 info-flows in 2011 and sustainable increase until it reaches its peak-year in 2013 with 179 info-flows. At that point, both *Afghanistan* and *Syria* have reached their peak when it comes to the level of *UK* agenda-attention. Even though both locations register a decrease in the frequency of the agenda-attention past its 2013 peak, *Syria* maintained its relevance, while *Afghanistan* has moved to the periphery of the agenda-continuum.

Now that we know how the agenda-attention was distributed across our time sample, it makes us wonder about 700 info-flows that propelled *Afghanistan* to the number one spot. To answer that question, we will not venture into great detail as we did with the *FCO*, but we will focus on the relationship between coordinative and communicative-agenda perspectives. As such, we can see a significant disequilibrium, as the *Announcements* collection is responsible for 92.14% of all the info-flows associated with this location. This may not surprise us if we consider that *Fatality notices* alone were accountable for most of those announcements[73]. Therefore, in this case, we could say that foreign affairs' communicative-agenda was closely aligned with military deployment risks and the consequences of those actions. Hence, it is not surprising that the agenda-attention frequency had dropped so rapidly when the causality risk was taken out of the equation following the military withdrawal. On another level, low figures

in the coordinative-agenda domain (n55) also suggest that the agenda-attention was very reactive in its composition as it responded to the consequences of the *UK* presence in highly unstable *Afghanistan*. Although we see precisely the same patterns when we look at Syria, 96.74% of all the info-flows were part of the *Announcements* collection, an even higher proportion than *Afghanistan*. If we consider that no British troops were ever deployed to Syria, aside from few special-forces missions, it suggests that the *UK* foreign policy is overwhelmingly communicative when dealing with the active-conflict countries.

Now that we are more aware of what happens at the very top-of-the-top, we can conclude this section by briefly reflecting on general Top 25% and Bottom 25% patterns (see figure 5-17) terms of their contextual groupings. As in the previous section, we are interested in the priority domain to attract actionable items that share similar attributes or mandates. In this case, we have decided to test this hypothesis by classifying each location in the context of Its geographic framework. In the process, we have organised a table that lists ten continents

| GeoSpatial clusters | Top 25% placement | Bottom 25% placement |
|---|---|---|
| | *Number of Locations* | |
| Australia and Pacific | 1 | 15 |
| Central America and the Caribbean | 0 | 10 |
| Central Asia | 2 | 0 |
| East Asia | 5 | 1 |
| Europe | 9 | 4 |
| MENA + Israel | 15 | 1 |
| North America | 2 | 1 |
| South America | 1 | 5 |
| South & Southeast Asia | 12 | 1 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 11 | 16 |
| *TOTAL:* | *58\** | *54\*\** |

**Legend:** Top 25% (green fields) - Bottom 25% (orange fields)

Red-coloured table cells represent the highest value in that constellation

MENA – the Middle East and North Africa

*Top 25% priority domain contains 59 locations, but the UK Mission to the United Nations, New York, is an organisational (membership) construct, not a location. It was not assigned a GeoSpatial association, which brings the final count to 58 entries for the top-end of the agenda-attention continuum.

**Bottom 25% priority domain contains 59 locations. However, the UK and the Commonwealth, The UK Permanent Delegation to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), UK Joint Delegation to NATO, UK Delegation to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and UK Delegation to Council of Europe are organisational (membership) constructs, not locations. They were not assigned a GeoSpatial association, which brings the final count to 54 entries for the bottom-end of the agenda-attention continuum.

**Figure 5-17:** GeoSpatial association for Worldwide Locations in terms of their geographic setting (continental and/or regional) for Top 15% and Bottom 25% entries.

and regions in alphabetical order and displays results for the Top 25% and Bottom 25% categories (see figure 5-17). Although the combined number of locations from both priority domains is 118, we could designate only 112 as six of the locations were not countries but international organisations. When we look at Top 25%, we can immediately see that four geographic areas are responsible for 81.03% of all the locations (n47) at the very top of the continuum. The most prominent is *MENA+Israel* which accounts for 15 locations is a clear sign that this geopolitical region is a top priority for the government, both in terms of its economic relationship and response to increasing instability and conflict. Not too far behind are *Southeast Asia* with 12 and *Sub-Saharan Africa* with 11 locations. Although it would be difficult to provide a precise rationale for such configuration without detailed analysis, we can confidently state that this may be due to the *Commonwealth* links that the *UK* has with countries that tend to be located in these two geospatial clusters. Lastly, we have *Europe* with nine locations which may be a surprising revelation for some considering that the *UK* is part of the continent and it was a member of the *EU* during our observed time frame. For others, these results can serve as yet another confirmation that the *UK* was always much more engaged with other parties around the world than with its neighbours. The top-end patterns also challenge the notion that the agenda-attention is conditioned by proximity, whereby we are more likely to be more engaged with the events that are geographically closer to the *UK*.

As we move to the Bottom 25% list, we can isolate three large clusters whose 41 locations are collectively responsible for 75.92% of the agenda-attention. The top geographic region appears to be *Sub-Saharan Africa* with 16 locations which could imply that these countries are either too small or do not have the *Commonwealth* link as their counterparts at the Top 25% domain. In sharp contrast to the top-end results, we find *Australia & Pacific* with 15 and *Central America & Caribbean* with 10 locations as a second and third largest group at the bottom of the continuum. This is a significant shift, as we only had *Australia* at the top from the *Pacific* cluster and no entries for *Central America and the Caribbean*. However, such extreme separation may be explained by the fact that most of these locations represent small island-states in the *Pacific* and the *Caribbean*. It is hard to imagine that they will exhibit significant institutional agenda-attention unless they require humanitarian assistance. Lastly, let us take into account that 44 countries form the European continent. We can calculate that 70.45% of them reside within the Middle 50% priority domain, which translates *UK* foreign policy towards Europe as being down the 'middle' of the geopolitical road – not amplifying or ignoring the relationships with its neighbours to the extreme.

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Worldwide Location | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | WL#01 | Afghanistan | 700 | |
| 2 | WL#201 | Syria | 676 | |
| 3 | WL#95 | India | 433 | |
| 4 | WL#47 | China | 417 | |
| 5 | WL#116 | Libya | 374 | |
| 6 | WL#216 | USA | 358 | |
| 7 | WL#167 | Russia | 348 | |
| 8 | WL#235b | UK Mission to the United Nations, NY | 318 | |
| 9 | WL#100 | Israel | 301 | |
| 10 | WL#217 | Ukraine | 298 | |
| 11 | WL#155 | Pakistan | 281 | |
| 12 | WL#73 | France | 264 | |
| 13 | WL#97 | Iran | 259 | |
| 14 | WL#98 | Iraq | 252 | |
| 15 | WL#64 | Egypt | 230 | |
| 15 | WL#103 | Japan | 230 | |
| 16 | WL#182 | Somalia | 209 | |
| 17 | WL#37 | Burma | 187 | |
| 17 | WL#79 | Germany | 187 | |
| 18 | WL#227 | Yemen | 186 | |
| 19 | WL#101 | Italy | 168 | |
| 20 | WL#153 | The Occupied Palestinian Territories | 163 | |
| 21 | WL#186 | South Sudan | 160 | |
| 22 | WL#106 | Kenya | 148 | **TOP 25%** |
| 23 | WL#196 | Sudan | 147 | |
| 24 | WL#150 | Nigeria | 145 | |
| 25 | WL#212 | Turkey | 142 | (n10,788) |
| 26 | WL#17 | Bangladesh | 125 | |
| 27 | WL#41 | Canada | 124 | |
| 28 | WL#185 | South Korea | 121 | |
| 29 | WL#113 | Lebanon | 120 | |
| 30 | WL#58 | Democratic Republic of Congo | 117 | |
| 30 | WL#161 | Philippines | 117 | |
| 31 | WL#104 | Jordan | 113 | |
| 31 | WL#177 | Sierra Leone | 113 | |
| 32 | WL#187 | Spain | 111 | |
| 32 | WL#218 | United Arab Emirates | 111 | |
| 33 | WL#29 | Brazil | 108 | |
| 34 | WL#16 | Bahrain | 106 | |
| 35 | WL#144 | Nepal | 105 | |
| 35 | WL#173 | Saudi Arabia | 105 | |
| 36 | WL#188 | Sri Lanka | 102 | |
| 36 | WL#224 | Vietnam | 102 | |
| 37 | WL#69 | Ethiopia | 101 | |
| 37 | WL#92 | Hong Kong | 101 | |
| 38 | WL#02 | Albania | 98 | |
| 39 | WL#12 | Australia | 95 | |
| 40 | WL#126 | Mali | 93 | |
| 41 | WL#178 | Singapore | 92 | |

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Worldwide Location | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 41 | WL#183 | South Africa | 92 | |
| 42 | WL#211 | Tunisia | 91 | |
| 43 | WL#151 | North Korea | 88 | |
| 44 | WL#80 | Ghana | 85 | TOP 25% |
| 45 | WL#124 | Malaysia | 84 | |
| 46 | WL#96 | Indonesia | 82 | |
| 47 | WL#03 | Algeria | 77 | (n10,788) |
| 47 | WL#105 | Kazakhstan | 77 | |
| 48 | WL#205 | Tanzania | 76 | |
| 49 | WL#175 | Serbia | 75 | |

* * * * *

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Worldwide Location | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 97 | WL#76 | Gabon | 15 | |
| 97 | WL#148 | Nicaragua | 15 | |
| 98 | WL#120 | Macao | 14 | |
| 98 | WL#131 | Mauritius | 14 | |
| 99 | WL#23 | Bermuda | 13 | |
| 99 | WL#159 | Paraguay | 13 | |
| 99 | WL#222 | Vanuatu | 13 | |
| 100 | WL#60 | Djibouti | 12 | |
| 100 | WL#114 | Lesotho | 12 | |
| 101 | WL#15 | Bahamas | 11 | |
| 101 | WL#117 | Liechtenstein | 11 | |
| 101 | WL#207 | Timor Leste | 11 | |
| 102 | WL#130 | Mauritania | 10 | |
| 102 | WL#197 | Suriname | 10 | |
| 102 | WL#198 | Swaziland | 10 | |
| 102 | WL#231 | UK and the Commonwealth | 10 | |
| 103 | WL#22 | Benin | 9 | BOTTOM 25% |
| 103 | WL#230 | The UK Permanent Delegation to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) | 9 | |
| 103 | WL#234 | UK Joint Delegation to NATO | 9 | (n366) |
| 104 | WL#42 | Cape Verde | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#87 | Guinea-Bissau | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#162 | Pitcairn Island | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#171 | Samoa | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#184 | South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#208 | Togo | 7 | |
| 104 | WL#233 | UK Delegation to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe | 7 | |
| 105 | WL#50 | Congo | 6 | |
| 105 | WL#66 | Equatorial Guinea | 6 | |
| 105 | WL#156 | Palau | 6 | |
| 105 | WL#209 | Tonga | 6 | |
| 106 | WL#05 | Andorra | 5 | |
| 106 | WL#24 | Bhutan | 5 | |

| Ranking Order | Reference Code | Worldwide Location | Number of Info-Flows | Percentile Cluster |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 106 | WL#143 | **Nauru** | 5 | |
| 107 | WL#107 | **Kiribati** | 4 | |
| 107 | WL#128 | **Marshall Islands** | 4 | |
| 107 | WL#215 | **Tuvalu** | 4 | |
| 107 | WL#232 | **UK Delegation to Council of Europe** | 4 | |
| 108 | WL#49 | **Comoros** | 3 | |
| 108 | WL#134 | **Micronesia** | 3 | |
| 108 | WL#172 | **San Marino** | 3 | |
| 108 | WL#225 | **Wallis and Futuna** | 3 | |
| 109 | WL#04 | **American Samoa** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#11 | **Aruba** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#26 | **Bonaire/St Eustatius/Saba** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#74 | **French Guiana** | 2 | **BOTTOM 25%** |
| 109 | WL#75 | **French Polynesia** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#84 | **Guadeloupe** | 2 | (n366) |
| 109 | WL#129 | **Martinique** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#132 | **Mayotte** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#136 | **Monaco** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#146 | **New Caledonia** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#192 | **St Maarten** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#194 | **St Pierre & Miquelon** | 2 | |
| 109 | WL#226 | **Western Sahara** | 2 | |
| 110 | WL#55 | **Curaçao (Willemstad)** | 1 | |
| 110 | WL#169 | **Réunion** | 1 | |
| 110 | WL#202 | **São Tomé and Principe** | 1 | |
| 111 | WL#170 | **Saint-Barthélemy** | 0 | |
| 111 | WL#193 | **St Martin** | 0 | |

**Figure 5-18**: Agenda-Attention Continuum for 237 Worldwide Locations: Top 25% and Bottom 25% entries. Source: www.GOV.uk

This chapter's main objective was to establish a *GOV.uk* agenda-attention continuum that ranks actionable government priorities according to institutional preferences (see figure 5-1). In the process, we have utilised the official *GOV.uk* organisational typology when constructing the continuum by incorporating five policy clusters: (a) 24+2 *Cabinet-level Departments*; (b) 47 *Policy Areas*; (c) 219 *Individual Policies*; (d) 49 *Topical Events*; and (e) 237 *Worldwide Locations*. By designating the *GOV.uk* info-flows as our primary research currency, when establishing the institutional agenda-attention frequency, we could determine an aggregated ranking order for 578 actionable items between 10.05.2010 and 10.05.2016. As such, we are confident that the continuum can be used as a useful historic policy reference when assessing which issues were

designated as an actionable government priority and how the *UK* government was (miss)interpreting prevalent socio-economic values during those six years.

The agenda-attention continuum was structured to accommodate a two-tier grading system. First, we have established a ranking order of each policy cluster individually by assigning a placement for actionable items along the vertical axes according to the number of associated info-flows. The more info-flows were attached to the individual item, the higher its actionable ranking would be along the continuum. Secondly, to make comparable observations between policy clusters, we have applied our 25-50-25 standardisation formula in juxtaposition to the aggregated ranking. In that way, we established a horizontal axis that groups ranked items from each policy cluster based on their Top 25%, Middles 50% and Bottom 25% priority domain. So, when we observe the overall continuum, we can immediately communicate the individual ranking order, its perceived 25-50-25 priority domain and a shared relationship that actionable items from different policy clusters have with each other.

While this approach allows us to align the agenda-setting research with the *Open-meets-Digital* construct, its significance is even more relevant for future research as this was probably the first attempt to use *GOV.uk* open and digital data to identify the official agenda list and rank actionable government priorities using government-sanctioned organisational typology and information. Whether we agree or disagree with how the government presents, classifies and communicates its activity is irrelevant as we are using the available data to translate institutional preferences at the level that was impossible before the launch of the *GOV.uk* platform. Although this methodology, like many others, is not 100% proof, we are confident that our approach can accurately define the frequency of institutional agenda-attention and the ranking order of actionable government priorities.

CHAPTER #05 **ENDNOTES**

[63] We have defined the 'Apex' group of the Cabinet-level Departments as: PM, DPM, CO, FCO, MoD, HO and HMT. See Chapters #03 and #04 for more details.

[64] Percentage Difference between two values online calculator (last accessed on 14.04.2019: https://www.omnicalculator.com/math/percentage-difference).

[65] House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 6193 (31 July 2019), *Financial services: contribution to the UK economy*. Pdf document weblink (last accessed on 02.06.2019: researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06193/SN06193.pdf).

[66] Wikipedia Entry 'Financial crisis of 2007–2008' (last accessed on 02.06.2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial_crisis_of_2007%E2%80%932008).

[67] Policy paper: '2010 to 2015 government policy: civil justice reform' (last accessed on 06.06.2019: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-civil-justice-reform).

[68] UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit) - (last accessed on 05.11.2019: https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/g8-2013).

[69] Scottish Referendum results as reported by the BBC on 19 September 2014. (last accessed on 17.07.2019: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/scotland-decides/results).

[70] The UK ceased all combat operations in Afghanistan and withdrew the last of its combat troops on the 27 October 2014. (last accessed on 05.11.2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Herrick).

[71] UK and international engagement with Afghanistan were increased following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA. From that point on the UK government was actively involved in the country, both in terms of military presence and post-war socio-economic reconstruction. Although the majority of British troops have left the country in 2014, FCO, MoD and DFID remain involved on the ground.

[72] Syrian Civil War – introductory paragraph from Wikipedia: "The unrest in Syria, part of a wider wave of the 2011 Arab Spring protests, grew out of discontent with the Syrian government and escalated to an armed conflict after protests calling for Assad's removal were violently suppressed. The war, which began on 15 March 2011 with major unrest in Damascus and Aleppo, is being fought by several factions." (last accessed on 06.11.2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War).

[73] As at 23 July 2015, a total of 454 British forces personnel or MOD civilians have died while serving in Afghanistan since the start of operations in October 2001. (last accessed on 06.11.2019: https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan).

# ANALYTICAL CHAPTERS

## OBSERVATIONS

We continue by reviewing fifteen elements that capture the essence of our objectives, data protocols, analysis and findings. This sitemap of statements can be a helpful checklist for researchers and policymakers when they assess the applicability of our model in their work:

### [1] Contextualising GOV.uk as 'InfoAttention Marketplace':

From the onset of our research, we have learned that users experience and characterise *GOV.uk* differently. While some see it as a depository of government information, others use it to access digital services. Correspondingly, some may classify this activity as an engagement with digital government, while others see it as a digitised bureaucratic process. Whether *GOV.uk* personifies a shift towards government as a platform or a platform for digital government is debatable. However, one thing is clear; *GOV.uk* is a digital-public space where *Information* and *Attention* are mutually dependent on each other as they oscillate between scarcity and overload depending on policy conditions. As a result, the supply-demand dynamics tend to create market-like conditions as agenda-attention cannot be distributed equally to all the actionable government priorities. Therefore, we have decided to contextualise the *GOV.uk* as *'InfoAttention Marketplace'* – a space where an open *Supply* of digitised government info-flows meets a digital footprint of users' *Demand* for open information. This approach allows us to focus on the 'actionable' agenda issues/events, which means that we only observe issues that have already found their way onto the official agenda. However, we acknowledge that *GOV.uk 'InfoAttention Marketplace'* has its constraints - this is not an open-source platform or a free-market construct. The government has complete control over published information and a monopoly over certain digital services. As such, the user has no choice but to interact with *GOV.uk* if it wants to access official data/documents, conduct a specific transaction or verify digital identity. Even though it is a controlled agenda space, we still get the unique opportunity to assess how agenda-attention (re)prioritises the ranking order of institutional preferences and public attentiveness to policy issues, events and locations.

### [2] Identifying 'Institutional Agenda-Shapers' and visualising the 'UK Policy Platform':

The launch of *GOV.uk* was a game-changer in terms of how we access open-digital government information and interpret the portal's organisational typology. This highly standardised and uniformed website reflects how government contextualises, categorises, displays and communicates different types/formats of information. Not only are we able to identify which departments and agencies are hosted on *GOV.uk*, but we can also visualise how government

organises and classifies its policymaking process. On the one hand, we can map out 357 departments/agencies that we define as *Institutional 'Agenda-Shapers'* and their associations with different policy clusters and published info-flows. We have decided to focus our attention on the *Apex* of the *UK Government (24+2 Cabinet-level Departments)* for this research.

On the other hand, we can visualise the '*UK Policy Platform'* through the lens of its four key clusters: 47 *Policy Areas*, 219 *Individual Policies*, 49 *Topical Events* and 237 *Worldwide Locations*. In our opinion, this is a significant opportunity for agenda research as it allows us to contextualise and repurpose the portal's knowledge management process. We no longer have to second-guess the government's thinking – we can use the official *'Open-meets-Digital'* framework to map out the *UK's* agenda-space, highlight its organisational interconnectedness and present institutional preferences. Therefore, the task is not to debate the government's approach and strategy; the objective is to extract research value from officially sanctioned open and digital information. Even though we cannot influence how *GOV.uk* is structured, we can be innovative in repurposing accessible information to materialise alternative research perspectives.

### [3] New and alternative 'data-chambers' and 'research currencies':

The *GOV.uk* portal is rich in data, and it is user-friendly interface allows us to identify sources that were previously not accessible to us – at least not in such a uniformed and interconnected manner. On the one hand, we can designate 357 *'Agenda-Shapers'*, 47 *Policy Areas*, 219 *Individual Policies*, 49 *Topical Events* and 237 *Worldwide Locations* as our institutional *GOV.uk* 'data-chambers' – a space where each 'info-flow' is identified by (1) its style or format (there are 25 distinct categories); (2) the attachment to one of the three information collections (*Publications, Statistics or Announcements*); and (3) contextual association with a dominant organisational and/or policy domain. On the other hand, we can capture users' digital footprint through *GOV.uk Performance* and use web analytics to assess '*what users want to think about'* while interacting with different portal segments.

While each 'data-chamber' can provide us with a distinct policy context, the 'research currencies' allow us to compute the agenda-attention frequency and rank actionable government priorities. In order to establish institutional preferences and public attentiveness to policy issues, we have aligned *Policy Agenda* (*Effector)* with a *Supply* of digitised government information; and *Public Agenda* (*Detector)* with a *Demand* for open government information. Therefore, published government 'info-flows' are designated as *Supply*-output and the number of 'pageviews' as our *Demand*-input 'research currencies'. To simplify and standardise the process, we have decided that 1 'info-flow' and 1 'pageview' are observed as a

single unit of agenda-attention. The reason for this approach was three-fold: (1) as we have 25 different types of 'info-flows', it was difficult to assign agenda-value solely on the format without dwelling into the content. While it is plausible that a policy report carries more 'agenda-weight' than a map, it would be challenging to prioritise a news story over a fatality notice; (2) from all the available web-analytics we consider the 'pageviews' to be the most reliable barometer of public attentiveness to selected issues. Specifically, because a single visitor may be responsible for multiple visits to a specific URL and whilst it is helpful to know how many users visit the portal, the 'pageviews' data is a more reliable indicator for the agenda-attention frequency; and (3) it allows us to make comparable observations between different agenda groups and policy domains. While we recognise that the suggested '1 = 1' data standardisation is more suitable for macro analysis, we still benefit from its findings as visualised data can signal which segments require more detailed analysis.

### [4] Materialising an 'Agenda List' of actionable government priorities:

Portals like *GOV.uk* are most suitable for observing the agenda-attention dynamics of actionable government priorities. By that, we refer to issues that have moved from the periphery to the epicentre of government activity – formally acknowledged as 'actionable' and 'implementation' issues. Before *GOV.uk,* it was challenging to establish and verify the official *'Agenda List'* as such information either did not exist or was not accessible. However, today, and in the context of our research time frame (10.05.2010 – 10.05.2016), we were able to define the *UK 'Agenda List'* of actionable government priorities by identifying 47 *Policy Areas*, 219 *Individual Policies*, 49 *Topical Events* and 237 *Worldwide Locations*. This is a turning point in agenda research. Not only are we able to construct an accurate list using official open-digital information at no extra cost, but we can also now designate more time and effort in observing what happens to issues once they are granted that 'actionable' status. As we know, being on the list does not necessarily mean that an item will maintain its priority status. Even actionable government priorities need to compete for limited agenda-attention during their life-cycle. In our view, this has led to a formation of a Tier-II agenda-setting process – an internal (re)prioritisation of 'actionable' items in response to fluctuations in agenda-attention frequency. Besides its political/policy significance, the *'Agenda List'* is also a historical record that captures socio-economic preferences for a particular period – it is a snapshot of institutional preferences and public attentiveness to policy issues, events and locations.

### [5] Computing the 'Agenda-Attention':

By focusing on the number of published 'info-flows,' we could compute institutional agenda-attention frequency for the overall system and individual actionable government priorities.

The proposed methodology can help researchers switch seamlessly between macro and microanalysis without disrupting the protocol's integrity. One can analyse actionable government priorities in individual, group or systemic context by adjusting the timeframe, policy focus, info-flow format, and interconnectivity level. From the macro perspective and in the context of our research timeframe (May 2010 – May 2016), we established that 357 government entities were responsible for 128,898 info-flows on the *GOV.uk* platform. We also know that 2014 was the peak year as we have detected 26,642 info-flows (21.67% of the overall supply-output). While the most significant annual increase of 28.42% was between 2013 and 2014, we have also noticed a decrease of 5.84% between 2014 (peak-year) and 2015, suggesting that the *Supply-output* of government information appears to be susceptible both to positive and negative annual punctuations.

This data gave us a primary baseline for all future calculations as we now have strictly defined limits of the agenda-attention framework for those six years. The next step was to establish benchmarks for each calendar year and policy clusters to calculate external and internal 'agenda-attention-market-share' for each block and individual government priorities compared to the overall system and within respective clusters. While knowing the agenda-attention frequency for a specific year, department, policy cluster or location is valuable information, it only becomes relevant if we can establish its ranking value by comparing it with other items and clusters. For example, if we say that a specific policy attracted X number of info-flows in 2015, that information alone is not telling us where policy is positioned along the agenda-continuum. However, if we can say that policy is trending high within its policy area and low within the designated department, we will build a much more detailed agenda picture. Overall, our model allows the researchers to apply multiple configurations and observe how the priority ranking fluctuates when adjusting our research perimeters and perspectives.

### [6] Top-of-the-Tops and (un)equal 'Agenda-Attention-Market-Share':

Once we know the overall number of published 'info-flows' and how many are associated with each of our *24+2 'Agenda-Shapers'* and four policy clusters, we can assess the individual 'agenda-attention-market-share' for each item. When it comes to 'agenda-power', we expected that *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments* - which account for only 7.28% of government entities on *GOV.uk* – will be associated with high agenda-attention frequency. Nevertheless, we were still surprised to discover that they are responsible for 77% of the published info-flows. In comparison, the remaining 92% of government entities (n331) are associated with 23% of the overall *Supply-output*. We have also established that *24+2 Cabinet-level*

*Departments* prefer the *Announcements* cluster (50.75% of the info-flows) compared to the *Publications* output of 43.74%. In contrast, the remaining 331 entities have a strong preference (65.40%) for *Publications'* coordinative nature of the policymaking process. Whether this suggests that the *Apex* of the *UK Government* is more concerned with strategic communications than policymaking requires a detailed analysis. In the meantime, our methodology was able to accomplish its objective by exposing patterns and signals that may not have been visible.

We can also state that the 'agenda-attention-market-share' is highly biased towards the actionable government priorities in the Top 25% domain. While we accept the logic that the top-ranking items will attract substantial attention, we did not expect to see such a considerable divergence between the top and bottom-end of the continuum. For example, the Top 25% items were responsible for a staggering 70.34% of all the 'info-flows' concerning the *Worldwide Locations*. Simultaneously, the *UK economy* policy area is another excellent example with its external 'agenda-attention-market-share' share of up to 11.34% - which firmly positions economy-related policies and events at the heart of the government's attention. A trend that applies to all other clusters, albeit at different levels.

We also detect that those at the very 'top-of-the-top' (first 3-5 items) tend to be responsible for most of the *Supply-output* within the respective priority domain. Such findings further reinforce the argument that 'actionable' status does not guarantee prominence as most of the agenda-attention appears to be associated with a handful of departments, policies, events and location. Even if we switch from an annual to monthly or daily perspective, the 'top-of-the-tops' patterns will not fluctuate, but the issues may change. While annual perspective can establish macro-trends, changing monthly/daily patterns can indicate short-lived, punctuated, cyclical or focused disruptions.

### [7] Institutional Agenda-Attention perspectives (Aggregated vs Coordinative vs Communicative):

As we mentioned previously, establishing a number of 'info-flows' alone is insufficient to build a more holistic picture of the agenda-attention process. Thanks to *GOV.uk* information coding, we can differentiate between 25 different types of 'info-flows' – from policy reports to *FOI* releases, maps, forms, fatality notices and news stories. Such an extensive cluster of different formats shows how government information comes in different shapes and sizes. The combined number of 'info-flows' for the system or a cluster gives us an *Aggregated* agenda-perspective – a macro picture of how government designates its widespread attention. In addition to format type, each 'info-flow' is associated with one of the three collections:

*Publications* (n18), *Statistics* (n1) *and Announcements* (n6). This configuration allows us to introduce two additional agenda-perspectives: *Coordinative* (publications) and *Communicative* (announcements). Statistics have remained unchanged as they only have one 'info-flow' and are distinctly different from the other two in their meaning. For example, if most 'info-flows' reflect a *Coordinative* agenda-perspective, we can say that the observed domain is associated with policy substance and implementation compared to the *Communicative* perspective, which is more about mainstreaming and amplification.

The aggregated results suggest that most of the info-flows are associated with the coordinative-agenda, as 48.72% of the *Supply-output* resides within the *Publications* domain. In contrast, the Announcements' communicative aspect is responsible for 43.78% and *Statistics* for 7.49% of the *agenda-attention-market-share*. Some may argue that such strong communicative numbers (n53,810) directly result from how the government is adapting to technological/societal changes – as demand for digital and open information is rebalancing a traditional role of an agenda-shaper, from a policymaker to a policy communicator.

### [8] Decoding the public attentiveness page-by-page, click-by-click:

Like most other data sources, the *GOV.uk* web-analytics cannot single-handedly provide a definite answer to *what people want to think about*. However, they can measure public attentiveness at a new level, as we can observe how individual citizens engage with the *GOV.uk* portal. As explained previously, we have decided to use 'pageviews' as our 'research currency' when defining public agenda and their *Demand-input* for open information. Although we must note that user's engagement with content conditioned with what is available on the portal – their agenda-attention can only be computed for what is published and presented on the portal, not their overall priorities. From our perspective, that is not an issue, as we want to observe how policy and public agendas are expressed within a single platform and under the same conditions. As each *'Agenda-Shaper'*, policy area, individual policy, topical event, location and individual 'info-flow' are designated a specific *URL*; we can make precise calculations using the number of 'pageviews' when defining the level of public attentiveness. Using this type of data is not novel in academic research, but what is new is our ability to obtain that information in the context of government performance. Even though not all web analytics are available online, one can always request specific data by placing a *Freedom of Information* request with the government as we did for specific domains. Now that we know that a combination of open access with targeted requests works in practice, we are confident that this protocol is operational and sustainable.

Data relating to the 'number of visitors' and 'pageviews' can be observed as a 'neutral' variable because we were not conditioning users' behavioural characteristics. Because the *GDS* web analytics were much later in the process, we only have the relevant data for March 2014 – May 2016 period, and from those figures, we know *GOV.uk* has materialised 6,162,065,083 pageviews. If we correlate that number with 1.2 billion 'unique visitors' and a 'bounce-rate' of 40%, we can claim that, on average, a visitor needs to engage with two or more pages during its daily visit in order to accomplish their task – to find information and/or conduct a digital transaction. We also know that 2015 was a peak year for the 'pageviews' (3,045,432,163), which means that 610 million unique visitors were responsible for close to 50% of the pageview activity during those twelve months. Such patterns reinforce our assertion that 2015 was a significant year for capturing users' agenda-attention on the *GOV.uk* platform.

It also appears that 92.04% of 'pageviews' (5.6 billion) are not associated with our focused homepages (2.07% for *GOV.uk* central homepage and 5.89% for *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments'* landing pages). Such distribution patterns suggest two things: (1) that the majority of visitors to *GOV.uk* know what they want/need and do not depend on the homepage navigation to 'surf' their way through the platform; and (2) that visitors tend to rely more on third-party intermediaries (search engines, social media, news portals, blogs and other websites), not *GOV.uk* homepages, to identify a direct link to information/service that they require. This suggests that *what* the public *wants to think about* on *GOV.uk* is somewhat pre-framed by different intermediaries and that there is a much stronger pageview alignment with the rest of *GOV.uk* content when visitors start their orientation from *GOV.uk* central homepage than there is when the same process is initiated from the department's landing page.

**[9] Observing the level of (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas:**
From our aggregated perspective, we can detect that the institutional and public agendas are not always aligned, especially when it comes to the overall *Supply-output* and in reference to *Publications* and *Announcements*. On the one hand, the *Supply-output* figures show that the largest number of info-flows was published in 2014. On the other hand, the *Demand-input* data indicates that the largest number of unique visitors and pageviews was materialised in 2015. However, those patterns are not extended to the *Statistics,* as they remain the only element where both agendas are aligned in terms of their 2015 output and input. Although, when it comes to the volume of published info-flows, we should stress that the difference between 2014 and 2015 is not so extensive. For example, it would have taken only 1,557 extra info-flows to equalise 2015 with 2014 aggregated output.

In terms of segmented analysis, the objective is to analyse selected samples from four policy clusters to determine the level of agenda-attention (miss)alignment for individual agenda-shapers and actionable government priorities. Although there is no official framework that could tell us what the expected level of agenda compatibility may be, we are slightly surprised to see that, on average, 55.37% of analysed actionable government priorities exhibit agenda alignment characteristics. While the policy areas had the lowest overall score of 44.67%, individual policies and locations have shown a 61% alignment, which is relatively high. Such results suggest that we can detect a higher degree of alignment between policy and public agendas when focusing on specific departments/locations or clearly defined policies.

By computing the agenda-attention for each group and then comparing their frequencies, we can use (mis)alignment indicators as early-warning signals. More substantial alignment between policy and public agenda could suggest favourable conditions for a new policy window to materialise. Even though many factors will influence that process, we could argue that the agenda-attention frequency is a viable indicator for establishing if the institutional and public agendas are in sync. Therefore, we can use our model to visualise patterns, detect signals and forecast potential changes in the agenda space that could provide policy entrepreneurs with the opportunity to (re)assess their options. If early signals indicate that the two agenda groups are on the alignment path, an appropriate policy intervention could strengthen the existing process.

### [10] 25-50-25 standardisation – comparing apples and oranges:

We are dealing with eclectic 'data-chambers', and in terms of data standardisation, we had to deal with two competing issues: (1) we were using two distinctly different research currencies (info-flow vs pageviews) to define policy and public agenda-attention frequency; and (2) in order to make comparable observations between different agenda-shapers and policy clusters we needed a formula that can help us assess the priority ranking on equal terms. Foremost, we were able to rank each actionable government priority in terms of its aggregated agenda-attention frequency. That process was sufficient if we were assessing the priority order within the same domain. However, if we wanted to detect the level of agenda (mis)alignment or compare the ranking order between different policy clusters, we had to develop a formula that could standardise our observations. We had to establish a mechanism that will allow us to compare different items in the context of their shared priority status.

To make the ranking order more comparable between different policy clusters, we have decided to organise the agenda-continuum into three contextual parts: (1) Top 25% - green area; (2) Middle 50% - yellow area; and (3) Bottom 25% - orange area. By applying this

formula, we would be able to observe and compare institutional priorities across the policy platform and not just within the individual policy clusters. As such, each item will have its agenda-attention ranking order (vertical flow - based on a number of associated info-flows) and its contextual priority (horizontal 25-50-25 association). While this approach will help us compare different policy elements, it will not try to equalise their policy mandates – for example, even if the *Tax and Revenue* policy area and the *NATO Summit Wales 2014* topical event are at the Top 25% of the continuum, they will continue to maintain their distinct agenda status for the respective audience. However, we will highlight that they share a common (top priority) thread regarding institutional preferences, even though they operate in different policy contexts. That additional layer of analysis is beneficial when constructing the big picture.

### [11] Agenda-Attention Continuum:

Our objective was to structure a priority ranking order of actionable government priorities that reflects institutional preferences. Although we have visualised a continuum as a single platform, we ranked the 'actionable' items in the context of their respective policy clusters. In that way, we were able to preserve their distinct contextual associations while computing each item's priority status separately. Furthermore, we can visualise and communicate a conceptual diversity of policy elements while providing a ranking order of their priorities within a single domain. By doing so, we are not just devising a replicable methodology protocol; we are also using the continuum to preserve socio-economic priorities and political norms of a particular timeframe for posterity. Once the ranking order of the *agenda-attention continuum* was constructed, we will examine each policy cluster by following a template-style analysis. As such, we were able to (1) calculate the internal and external perspective of the *agenda-attention-market-share* for each cluster; (2) focus on highest and lowest actionable items within each policy cluster; (3) examine contextual characteristics of the *Top 25%* and *Bottom 25%* of entries; (4) reflect on the 25-50-25 distribution patterns; and (5) determine if the frequency of institutional agenda-attention is responsible for the formation of the 'apex' group of actionable items at the top of the continuum crowning. The stated framework provides us with the blueprint to construct the *GOV.uk Agenda-Attention Continuum* as a three-tier platform:

1. ***Agenda-attention ranking order***: each entry's position along the continuum is determined by the aggregated level of the agenda-attention (number of associated info-flows) materialised between 10 May 2010 and 10 May 2016. Individual entries are displayed in vertical order (from highest to lowest) within their respective policy

clusters. In order to fit all 558 entries into a single visualisation, we had to use reference codes and not their full titles.

2. ***Policy cluster association***: the agenda-attention ranking order is established and displayed within the contextual domain of each policy cluster: (a) *24+2 Cabinet-level Departments*; (b) 47 *Policy Areas*; (c) 219 *Individual Policies*; (d) 49 *Topical Events*; and (e) 237 *Worldwide Locations*. In that way, we can assess institutional preferences in terms of the item's policy mandate/jurisdiction and the agenda profile.

3. ***Contextual priority levels***: the horizontal space of the agenda-continuum is divided into three parts: (1) Top 25% - green zone; (2) Middle 50% - yellow zone; and (3) Bottom 25% of entries - orange zone. This approach allows us to simultaneously establish and display the entry's agenda-attention ranking order within the policy cluster and its association with the contextual priority level. As such, we can compare disparate policy elements in terms of their common 25-50-25 denominator. This standardisation level allows us to introduce a concept of shared ranking/priority value for each entry while maintaining their distinct policy mandate and agenda profile. As a result, we can observe how institutional preferences are reflected in different policy contexts at the same priority level.

*[12] (re)Prioritisation of the ranking order:*

Once we establish an aggregated agenda-attention, it does not mean that the ranking order for 'actionable' items is permanently fixed. First, it depends on the observed timeframe; the individual item's priority ranking would differ significantly if observed in an annual, monthly or daily context. By adjusting our timeframe, we can observe the (re)prioritisation effect of the ranking order as 'actionable' items fluctuate along the continuum. Second, by switching from aggregated to coordinative and communicate agenda-perspectives, we effectively observe the (re)prioritisation effect according to a contextual association. For example, an 'actionable' item may be at the Top 25% in terms of its aggregated ranking, but in the Middle 50% for communicative agenda-perspective. Such patterns can tell us if items overall ranking status is due to a strong association with publications or the announcements. Although we have used these three agenda-perspectives in our analytical chapters, one can easily design additional configurations. We can establish a priority ranking order based on extreme punctuations (large annual/monthly changes), the level of interconnectedness (e.g., how many policies are attached to each policy area) or by life-cycle (when was 'actionable' status awarded or completed). Each additional perspective, coupled with timeframe adjustments, can provide a completely different picture for each actionable government priority. We can note that very

few items and departments will retain the same priority level as we switch between different perspectives. If they do, that is a telling sign that they are either a top priority or continue to reside on the periphery of institutional preferences. Therefore, it is advisable to apply at least aggregated vs coordinative vs communicative test to map out the ranking order (re)prioritisation effect. In the process, one can notice patterns and signals that would never emerge if we observed actionable government in the context of a single agenda-attention perspective or a timeframe.

### [13] The intricate web of connections, associations, overlaps and attachments:

In addition to providing us with open and digital data, the *GOV.uk* organisational framework and knowledge management system allows us to visualise links between different 'info-flows', departments and policy clusters. The *GOV.uk* filters allow us to specify how we want to construct our search for 'info-flows' by selecting different search categories and specifying dates. For example, we can request all *Policy reports* published in 2014 by the FCO concerning the *Climate change* policy area. Equally, we can use information from 'info-flow' coding to determine which *Departments* and *Policy Areas* are associated with specific *Policies* or *Locations*. Each new search will expose an additional layer of information that one can use to build a more comprehensive agenda-attention picture. In the process, one can map out different attachments, associations and connections and expose the interconnectedness between different departments and policy clusters. We can argue that the intricacy of these links can successfully mimic the complexity of the policymaking process in specific domains. Additional research will be required if the level of interconnectedness is correlated with the agenda-attention frequency. It would be interesting to know if the top-ranking policy is also most complex due to the number of attached departments, policy areas and/or locations.

### [14] Resourceful, but constrained; Adaptable, but unpredictable:

Even though we consider *GOV.uk* to be a resourceful and user-friendly platform for agenda-attention research, we also must acknowledge the constraints and challenges that one faces when dealing with the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct. First, we have to remind ourselves that if data is open and digital, it does not mean that it is permanent. Information can be easily removed, edited or reclassified - what you see today may not be accessible tomorrow. Therefore, one has to be very organised when it comes to data collection and ensure that relevant information is preserved in a suitable format. If one cannot download large datasets, it is advisable to save relevant URLs and make screenshots. In that way, if the information is

missing or amended, one can use web-based tools to retrieve historic cached records and combine screenshots to retrace its steps and extract relevant information.

As *GOV.uk* is evolving, the biggest issue is changing organisational typology, information coding and user interface. The *GDS* is continually fine-tuning the portal to make it more user-friendly and innovative, but in the process, these disruptions can seriously affect the research design. This cautionary note reflects our experience with changes to the '*UK Policy Platform'* and its clusters. Even though we were fortunate to experience a relatively stable period when collecting data, our research design was aligned with the government's framework. When we started this process, we were attracted to the idea that we can use *GOV.uk* data and structure to finally translate how government organises its information and structures its policymaking process. Therefore, any changes to the official framework can affect how we continue our data collection and analysis protocols. On one occasion, the government has decided to rename policy titles (they were deemed too long and technical), but that rebranding act had an automatic technical consequence as all URLs have changed. On another occasion, the *GDS* has decided to rename *Policy Topics* into *Policy Areas* and, in the process, change how policy attachments were presented. On both occasions, we were able to adapt to the new situation because we kept detailed URL records and screenshots, which allowed us to find historical records and update our database. In that context, we can say that our data is now a historical record as it shows how the *UK Government* was presenting and communicating its policymaking between 2010 and 2016. Our ability to use *GOV.uk* as a sustainable source of information can be challenged if the uniformity and standardisation of the *GOV.uk* platform are not maintained. Even if we can still access 'info-flows' and 'pageviews', any radical changes to how government clusters policy domains or classifies information can affect how we analyse the agenda-attention frequency over time.

### *[15] (un)Limited combinations:*

On the one hand, the *GOV.uk* portal is resourceful and rich in digital data that can be easily repurposed to support different analytical models. On the other hand, the platform is relatively constraint and is dependent on government action – they decided what is published, presented or promoted on the site. Still, one can easily get overwhelmed with endless opportunities to correlate and interconnect different 'data-chambers' and 'info-flow' formats with an increasing number of actionable government priorities and institutional *'Agenda-Shapers'*. In order to extract the most value from a centralised government portal that keeps growing, one needs to be more focused when defining a hypothesis and drafting research protocols. While those who are more confident in their research goals can have a targeted approach, others can benefit from an 'accidental research exposure' by engaging with random

datasets in a less structured manner. By looking at data from different perspectives, not just technical number crunching, one can discover untapped research potential. Creative thinking can compensate for the lack of technical knowledge if one can extract a 'hidden' value from existing information, introduce alternative perspectives, visualise impact links and contextualise what is already visible to everyone accessing the GOV.uk platform.

# CONCLUSION

## Applicability for the Agenda-Attention Research

In the previous two analytical chapters, we demonstrated that platforms like *GOV.uk* could provide us with new data, alternative perspectives and comparable insights when identifying actionable government priorities (see figure 6-1), ranking institutional preferences, detecting public attentiveness, observing (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas and computing the frequency of the agenda-attention. As such, we are confident that our methodology can unlock the *'Open-meets-Digital'* research potential of centralised government portals when analysing the agenda-attention process. By focusing on the supply and demand dynamics of institutional preferences and public attentiveness to actionable government priorities, we were able to:

- Map out the scope and scale of the *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* by focusing on the *Institutional Effectors* (supply-output of information) and *Public Detectors* (demand-input for information) within the realm of open and digital government;

- Align *Open-meets-Digital* construct with the agenda-setting framework by showcasing how emerging data-chambers can be contextualised and applied for decoding the frequency of institutional and public agenda-attention;

- Validate the relevance and usability of our two research currencies: (a) published info-flow as a unit of institutional agenda-attention; and (b) pageviews data as an indicator of the public agenda-attention;

- Establish key macro-benchmarks which can be used to calculate the agenda-attention-market-share of the agenda-shapers, policy clusters and individual actionable government priorities;

- Observe the level of (miss)alignment between the *Supply-output* (institutional agenda) and *Demand-input* (public agenda) in terms of aggregated agenda-attention.

Furthermore, we would also like to show how our methodology, insights and findings fit in the broader academic discourse as we address the applicability of our approach to the existing theoretical frameworks. We hope that such alignment will reinforce our argument that we don't require new theoretical models to accommodate new data frameworks, as one can apply our *InfoAttention Marketplace* modelling to bridge the gap between practice and theory. Equally, we want to discuss how our experience can contribute to the study the agenda-attention process for public policy researchers and practitioners. As such, we hope that the following sections will help us structure our thoughts accordingly.

## POLICY TOPICS

Arts and culture
Borders and immigration
Business and enterprise
Children and young people
Climate change
Community and society
Consumer rights and issues
Crime and policing
Defence and armed forces
Employment
Energy
Environment
Equality, rights and citizenship
Europe
Financial services
Food and farming
Foreign affairs
Further education and skills
Government efficiency, transparency and accountability
Government spending
Higher education
Housing
International aid and development
Law and the justice system
Local government
Media and communications
National Health Service
National security
Northern Ireland
Pensions and ageing society
Planning and building
Public health
Public safety and emergencies
Regulation reform
Rural and countryside
Schools
Science and innovation
Scotland
Social care
Sports and leisure
Tax and revenue
Trade and investment
Transport
UK economy
Wales
Welfare
Wildlife and animal welfare

## INDIVIDUAL POLICIES

2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy
Academies and free schools
Financial services
Higher education
Rural and countryside
Accessible transport
Administrative justice reform
Afghanistan
Alcohol sales and misuse
Animal and plant health
Animal research and testing
Animal welfare
Armed forces and Ministry of Defence reform
Armed Forces Covenant
Armed forces support for activities in the UK
Arts and culture
Automatic enrolment in workplace pensions
Aviation and airports
Bank regulation
Biodiversity and ecosystems
Bovine tuberculosis (bovine TB)
British nationals overseas
Broadband investment
Building regulation
Business and the environment
Business enterprise
Business regulation
Business tax reform
Cancer research and treatment
Carers' health
Central government efficiency
Child maintenance reform
Childcare and early education
Children outside mainstream education (alternative provision)
Children's health
Children's social workers
Choice in health and social care
City Deals and Growth Deals
Civil justice reform
Civil service reform
Climate change adaptation
Climate change impact in developing countries
Climate change international action
Common Agricultural Policy reform
Communications and telecoms
Community integration
Company law reform
Compassionate care in the NHS
Competition law
Conflict in fragile states
Conservation of historic buildings and monuments
Constitutional reform
Consumer credit market
Consumer protection
Corporate governance
Council Tax reform
Counter-terrorism
Crime prevention
Criminal justice reform
Cyber security
Deficit reduction
Dementia
Drug misuse and dependency
Economic development in coastal and seaside areas
Economic growth in developing countries
Economic growth in rural areas
Economic growth in Wales
Education in developing countries
Education of disadvantaged children
Elite sports performance
Emergency planning
Employment
End of life care
Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis
Energy demand reduction in industry, business and the public sector
Energy efficiency in buildings
Energy industry and infrastructure licensing and regulation
Environmental quality
Equality
European funds
European single market
Export controls
Exports and inward investment
Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination
Family justice system
Farming industry regulation
Financial services regulation
Fire prevention and rescue
Flooding and coastal change
Food and farming industry
Forests and woodland
Free trade
Freight
Freshwater fisheries
Further education and training
Gambling regulation
Governance in developing countries
Government as a Platform
Government buying
Government spending
Government transparency and accountability
Greenhouse gas emissions
Harmful drinking
Health and safety reform
Health and social care integration
Health emergency planning
Health in developing countries
High streets and town centres
Higher education participation
Homebuying
House building
Household energy
Housing for older and vulnerable people
HS2: high speed rail
Human rights internationally
Humanitarian emergencies
Hunger and malnutrition in developing countries
Immigration and borders
Industrial strategy
International defence commitments
Iran's nuclear programme
Justice system transparency
Knife, gun and gang crime
Labour market reform
Legal aid reform
Library services
Local council transparency and accountability
Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Enterprise Zones
Local government spending
Local transport
Localism
Long term health conditions
Looked-after children and adoption
Low carbon technologies
Major project management
Management of the European Regional Development Fund
Marine environment
Marine fisheries

Maritime sector
Media and creative industries
Mental health service reform
Museums and galleries
National events and ceremonies
National Lottery funding
NHS efficiency
Northern Ireland community relations
Northern Ireland economy
Northern Ireland political stability
Northern Ireland security
Nuclear disarmament
Obesity and healthy eating
Older people
Overseas aid effectiveness
Overseas aid transparency
Patient safety
Peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa
Personal tax reform
Piracy off the coast of Somalia
Planning reform
Planning system
Policing
Postal service reform
Poverty and social justice
Public understanding of science and engineering
Radioactive and nuclear substances and waste
Rail network
Regional Growth Fund
Rented housing sector
Reoffending and rehabilitation
Research and development
Research and innovation in health and social care
Road network and traffic
Road safety
Rural economy and community
School and college accountability
School and college funding
School and college qualifications and curriculum
School behaviour and attendance
School building and maintenance
Scottish constitution
Scottish devolution
Sentencing reform
Sexual violence in conflict
Smoking
Social action
Social enterprise
Social investment
Social mobility
Special educational needs and disability (SEND)
Sports participation
Stability in the Western Balkans
State Pension age
State Pension simplification
Support for families
Sustainable development
Tax evasion and avoidance
Teaching and school leadership
The Commonwealth
Tourism
Transport emissions
Transport security
UK economic growth
UK energy security
UK nuclear deterrent
UK Overseas Territories
UK prosperity and security: Asia, Latin America and Africa
Victims of crime
Violence against women and girls
Waste and recycling
Water and sanitation in developing countries
Water and sewerage services
Water industry
Water quality
Weapons proliferation
Welfare reform
Welsh devolution
Women and girls in developing countries
Young offenders
Young people

## TOPICAL EVENTS

UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit)
Open Government Partnership Summit 2013
Friends of Yemen, 7 March 2013
First World War Centenary
Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council
Autumn Statement 2012
Somalia Conference 2013
DS London 2014: leading digital governments
UK Presidency of G7 2013
Budget 2013
Queen's Speech 2013
Spending Round 2013
Scottish independence referendum
Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict
London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014
Autumn Statement 2013
NATO Summit Wales 2014
London Conference on Afghanistan 2014
Budget 2014
March Budget 2015
Budget 2016
UK Pavilion at Milan Expo 2015
D-Day 70
Girl Summit 2014
Queen's Speech 2014
Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients
Daesh: UK government response
Ebola virus: UK government response
Autumn Statement 2014
National Apprenticeship Awards 2015
National Apprenticeship Week 2015
VE Day 70th anniversary
Election 2015
Nepal earthquake April 2015
Summer Budget 2015
Queen's Speech 2015
Bastion Memorial Dedication
VJ Day 70th anniversary
Battle of the Somme Centenary
Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015
Youth Summit 2015
United Nations General Assembly 2015
Farming
UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017
EU referendum
Winter flooding 2015 to 2016: community support
National Apprenticeship Awards 2016
National Apprenticeship Week 2016
Supporting Syria Conference 2016

## WORLDWIDE LOCATIONS

Afghanistan
Albania
Algeria
American Samoa**
Andorra
Angola
Anguilla*
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Aruba**
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bermuda*
Bhutan
Bolivia
Bonaire/St Eustatius/Saba**
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
British Antarctic Territory*
British Indian Ocean Territory*
British Overseas Territories*
British Virgin Islands*
Brunei
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burma
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Cape Verde
Cayman Islands*
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Comoros
Congo
Costa Rica
Cote d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba

Curaçao (Willemstad)**
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic Republic of Congo
Denmark
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Estonia
Ethiopia
Falkland Islands*
Fiji
Finland
France
French Guiana**
French Polynesia**
Gabon
Gambia
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Gibraltar*
Greece
Grenada
Guadeloupe**
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Holly See***
Honduras
Hong Kong***
Hungary
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kiribati
Kosovo
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Latvia
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Libya
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Macao***
Macedonia
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Mali
Malta
Marshall Islands
Martinique**
Mauritania
Mauritius
Mayotte**
Mexico
Micronesia
Moldova
Monaco
Mongolia
Montenegro
Montserrat*
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Nauru
Nepal
Netherlands
New Caledonia**
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
North Korea
Norway
The Occupied Palestinian Territories***
Oman
Pakistan
Palau
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Pitcairn Island*
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Russia
Rwanda
Réunion**
Saint-Barthélemy**
Samoa
San Marino
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Serbia
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Slovakia
Slovenia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands*
South Korea
South Sudan
Spain
Sri Lanka
St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha*
St Kitts and Nevis
St Lucia
St Maarten**
St Martin**
St Pierre & Miquelon**
St Vincent and The Grenadines
Sudan
Suriname
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
São Tomé and Príncipe
Taiwan
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Thailand
Timor Leste
Togo
Tonga
Trinidad & Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Turks & Caicos Islands*
Tuvalu
USA
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uganda
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Venezuela
Vietnam
Wallis and Futuna**
Western Sahara***
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe
The UK Permanent Delegation to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
UK and the Commonwealth^
UK Delegation to Council of Europe^
UK Delegation to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe^
UK Joint Delegation to NATO^
UK Mission to the United Nations, Geneva^
UK Mission to the United Nations, New York^
UK Mission to the United Nations, Vienna^

**Figure 6-1:** The UK Agenda List of Actional Government Priorities (formulated using 47 Policy Topics – 219 Individual Policies – 49 Topical Events – 238 Worldwide Locations). Source: www.GOV.uk

From the onset of our research, we have specified that centralised government portals represent a new research opportunity and access to a new type of content. In the process, we have structured a detailed methodology framework that observes *GOV.uk* as *InfoAttention Marketplace*. A place where somewhat conflicting dynamics of Open-Information and Digital-Attention interact and generate a new type of data that can help us compute the frequency of institutional and public agenda attention. But we have also stated that such a new approach to observing agenda dynamics does not necessarily require a new set of theories, models or frameworks. On the contrary, we believe that the existing agenda framework can absorb the alternative perspectives and new data sources derived from centralised government portals. These frameworks are foundationally astute, but they are missing a methodology that can contextualise new data and translate a typology of government's knowledge management into tangible outputs. Which we have set to accomplished in our research.

Focusing on institutional preferences and actionable government priorities, we must examine *Policy Agenda* frameworks relevant to our research design and methodology. In *Chapter #03*, we have summarised some of the most pertinent agenda-attention approaches, from *Incrementalism to Agenda-Building, Punctuated Equilibrium, Issue-Attention Cycle*, *Multiple Policy Streams / 'Garbage Can' model, Focused Adaptation and Four "P"s of the Agenda-Setting* concepts. Foremost, because these approaches tend to analyse the entire [institutional] agenda process, use longitudinal case-study methods, and propose a complete agenda-formation model. Moreover, some of their insights are relevant to our research design. They focus on the level of attention attributed to specific policy domains and how it changes over time. In the following pages, we will briefly reflect on each approach to show how our modelling and research design are beneficial and applicable to the existing theoretical frameworks.

### *Incrementalism*

A critical characteristic of this approach is the lack of agreement on how one can measure or define an 'increment'. Such a lack of standardisation can make it difficult to compare different topics, policies or events. Our model brings into the equation the ability to map out the big (macro) picture of all the agenda-shapers and policy domains using info-flows and pageviews data. Once you know who is publishing/accessing what, when and how many times, you have the unique opportunity to understand how the *InfoAttention Marketplace* operates. By moving from aggregated (annual) to a granular (daily) agenda perspective, you can start noticing different patterns – how the frequency of the agenda-attention for a department, topic, policy,

event, or location changes over time. Therefore, in the context of our research, we can assert that an info-flow can be observed as institutional and pageview as a public 'increment.' The aggregated number of these signals within the observed timeframe won't determine 'incremental' characteristics. Instead, those data-signals allow us to correlate the timings with the number of published info-flows or accessed pageviews. For example, if a single policy was associated with 148 info-flows in 2015, that fact alone won't explain if the frequency of the agenda-attention was punctuated or incremental. But by distilling that information down to months and days, one could detect if those signals are evenly spread across days/months or whether most of that attention was congregated around specific dates. Not only can we apply such a lens to each policy, event or location, but we can also make standardised comparisons across different departments and policy domains. Our model allows us to determine if the incrementalism is more widespread; or whether specific topics, departments or timeframes are more susceptible to such policymaking than others.

### The Issue Attention Cycle

Similar to the previous example, our ability to map out supply or demand characteristics for individual issues or collective clusters provides us with immense flexibility to observe the frequency of the agenda-attention from different perspectives. In this context, a regularity of patterns in terms of volume and timing can help users determine whether specific policies, events or departments are forming the issue attention cycle. Even though the cyclical attributes can be displayed within the singular calendar year, it is beneficial to determine if particular issues demonstrate a one-off, short-lived or reoccurring cycle by observing such patterns over the extended time frame. It is preferable to make such observations in the context of a full calendar year to determine if specific dates play a role at different stages of a cycle. For example, if a sudden increase or decline in attention is closely correlated with a recurring date in the government's calendar (e.g., tax year, budget announcement), it would suggest that the issue attention cycle can be more predictive. Whilst other issues may be more susceptible to external risks and unexpected developments. In addition, by switching from aggregated to coordinative or communicative agenda-attention perspective, one can determine if the cyclical patterns are only visible in a specific context or are equally represented in each domain. For example, suppose those characteristics are only visible in the connections of the *Announcements*. In that case, one could argue that the government is fostering such features by proactively shaping such conditions or being overly reactive/underactive in response to a rapidly changing environment. Furthermore, our modelling allows us to test whether the cyclical patterns are only associated with institutional

preferences or whether the public attentiveness to the same issue exhibits the same patterns. If so, we can identify alignment between policy and public agendas throughout or during the issue attention cycle stages.

### *Multiple Policy Streams and the Garbage Can Model*

In reflection, we can say that our *GOV.uk InfoAttention Marketplace* resembles Kingdon's 'garbage can' analogy whereby a variety of institutional agenda-shapers, government's info-flows / topics / policies / events / locations and the digital public attention co-exist independently from each other within the 'Open-meets-Digital' construct of a centralised government website. While we expect to detect a significant divergence between institutional preferences and public attentiveness, we may discover that their agenda-attention frequency is sometimes aligned, as they occupy the same (25-50-25) priority sphere of the ranking order. Such conditions could be interpreted as a signal that a policy window is materialising the policy entrepreneur's conditions to (re)prioritise the ranking order of actionable government priorities. On other occasions, the agenda-attention frequency can provide valuable insights into how the (re)prioritisation phenomenon can change our policy perceptions when switching between different agenda-perspectives. On the one hand, we understood how actionable items and departments could change their agenda-attention position depending on the observed time frame and contextual association. As such, we can understand how issues can move from the periphery to the epicentre of institutional or public attention. On the other hand, we measured the agenda (miss)alignment between institutional preferences and public attentiveness to the same issues. Ability to determine at which 25-50-25 priority level we have the agenda alignment meant we could make predictive assumptions regarding the policy window. For example, suppose the alignment is at the Top 25%. In that case, we could say that the Policy Entrepreneur (agenda-shaper) conditions are most favourable to initiate change as both the institutional framework and public attention appear to be in sync. Equally, we could say that the conditions are much less favourable when the alignment is at the Bottom 25% or suggest that the policy window is closing. In comparison, the agenda-attention alignment within the Middle 50% area can signal that the policy window can either increase its momentum for the agenda-shaper or lose the capacity to bring the three streams together. Furthermore, by observing Cabinet-level Departments, we can assess their policy entrepreneur characteristics by correlating the agenda-attention frequency with the type of published info-flows. If those patterns are more skewed towards a coordinative or communicative agenda-perspective, it can provide valuable insights into how specific shapers position themselves

along the agenda-attention continuum. The volume will attract attention, but the type of information will determine the longevity of that life-cycle.

### Punctuated Equilibrium

Theoretically, a 'punctuation' can be a relatively small development along the agenda-attention continuum. For example, if a specific policy has a relatively low or stable info-flow association (e.g., one per week), an increase from one to three info-flows within a week can generate that punctuated signal. It immediately tells us that that domain has a sudden agenda-attention development. However, the context of that punctuation changes, if that was just a one-off display or a regular pattern of relative calm periods, interrupted with sudden changes in the frequency of the agenda attention. Our methodology allows us to convert our data into tables or visualisation that can identify and highlight punctuated signals. As you observe an individual issue, you will constantly notice up-and-down patterns. The key to understanding the punctuated equilibrium is to use the *InfoAttention Marketplace* dynamics to determine the extreme nature of those punctuations. To do so, one has to start from aggregated (annual) rather than the granular (weekly/daily) perspective. Only then can you detect extreme highs and lows as you observe one issue over several years. For example, a relatively stable annual average of 236 info-flows for individual policy can change our perceptions if that suddenly drops to 36 info-flows from one year to another. That is a perfect example of an extreme punctuated equilibrium which you may not necessarily be able to identify if you were observing monthly or daily data s such change may not have such extreme characteristics. One such signal is detected; our model allows the researchers to go more granular and more substantive by testing whether such punctuations are driven by a particular type of info-flow, timeframe or coordinative vs communicative dynamics. Therefore, our approach allows us to detect that important signal in the noise and apply the almost forensic approach to determining the conditions that govern such patterns. Equally, these patterns can be applied both to policy and public agendas.

### The Four "P"s of Agenda-Setting

Zahariadis argues that the process of agenda-setting, in its most basic arrangement, contains four fundamental [P] elements: (1) *Power* is defined as one of the most important elements in the agenda-setting process; (2) *Perception* affects how we see issues, which we deem to be more critical than others, and rationalise that selection; (3) *Potency* refers to the intensity of a

particular issue; and (4) *Proximity* element suggests that people are more likely to pay attention to an issue or an event if it appears to be 'closer to home.' As such, it is important to note that his model can be well aligned with our approach if you make appropriate attachments and associations between the four Ps and the existing organisational typology of the *GOV.uk* portal.

- To begin with, we would associate *Power* with our institutional agenda-shapers – all the government departments and agencies residing on *the GOV.uk* platform. By analysing agenda-attention dynamics, we can quickly determine which department is more prominent in aggregated, coordinative or communicative terms. We can easily determine the power balance between the Cabinet-level Departments and other agencies as much as we can determine if those actors are in business of coordinating or communicating government policy.

- The *Perception* element can be associated with the Individual Polices cluster as it allows us to compute the agenda-attention frequency for each policy by mapping out the institutional preferences and public attentiveness to the same issue. On the one hand, we can establish a ranking order and observe the reprioritisation factor as we change agenda-perspectives and associated time frames. On the other hand, we can determine if there is a (mis)alignment between policy and public agendas for that policy.

- Individual policies can command a substantial agenda-attention-market share if we group them in the context of a common denominator. However, we can get a better sense if specific topical clusters attract more attention than others. As such, we would associate *Potency* with *GOV.UK* Policy Areas as we can use officially sanctioned categorisation to determine if energy is more important than health, immigration or schools at any given time. Our model allows us to constantly change perspectives in order to understand if original patterns remain stable across all domains or whether they change once we add or remove an additional layer of complexity.

- Lastly, *Proximity* is logically attached to Worldwide Locations, allowing us to demonstrate a two-tier ranking order. The first one is based on the frequency of associated agenda-attention (number of info-flows or pageviews). The second one is based on the geographic distance – how far are these countries from the UK in kilometres. Each will tell us a different story, but when we apply our 25-50-25 standardisation formula, we can see if there are clear correlations between (geopolitical) attention and Proximity to the *UK* shores.

### *Focused Adaptation*

The authors of this approach claim that policy change can not necessarily be attributed to a single concept during the entire process. Instead, they propose that the policy agenda show multiple characteristics of previously discussed concepts. As such, it is plausible that we can encounter incrementalism, punctuated equilibrium and/or issue attention at different stages of the process, which is precisely what our *InfoAttention Marketplace* manifests – a platform to test the agenda-attention dynamics in a filtered approach. By adding or removing a layer of complexity, one can see patterns that were not obvious if we have, for example, observed the supply-demand dynamics in the context of aggregated numbers within a single calendar year. This flexibility of our model to shift from one perspective to another with relative ease allows us to form a holistic picture and make evidence-based analytical observations. For example, suppose we are to detect the signals of focused adaptation across the government system. In that case, we need to have a structured approach to data analysis that relies on the adaptive nature of the associated methodology framework. Equally, we can use our approach to identify when new information and external events enter the system and how it cascades across different departments, policy areas, individual policies, topical events or worldwide locations. Although our model can provide insight into how public agenda-attention manifests itself in the realm of institutional preferences. There are limitations to account for its effect or feedback loop – whether the government is adjusting its position based on the frequency of associated agenda-attention across the GOV.uk platform. Still, the ability to map out a government system using officially sanctioned typology and provide ranking priorities in correlation with multiple agenda-perspectives only reinforces our claim that centralised government portals remain an untapped resource for the agenda research that is waiting to be explored.

## Capturing Agenda-Snapshot for Posterity

The *GOV.uk* agenda-attention continuum represents an aggregated-agenda perspective, which allows us to contextualise the scope and scale of government activity over the six years. As such, we could say that the aggregated ranking is our control variable as it calculates a cumulative effect within the specified time frame. However, the policy clusters analysis has shown that our perception of the ranking order can quickly change depending on which data elements we focus on and at what time. For example, we will get a different ranking order within the same policy cluster if we focus on a multi-year time-frame vs a single year; equally, we can benefit from a different contextual perspective if the ranking order is based on *Publications* vs the *Announcements* data. Subsequently, if our perception changes, it means that the ranking order has also changed. Therefore, we could argue that the ranking order is not a fixed feature because it's in a constant state of reprioritisation. Although the aggregated-agenda perspective will remain our principal benchmark, each additional perspective will interject a new context that can help us build a more holistic picture of the agenda process.

While the actionable status may keep an item on the agenda-continuum, it does not mean that it will benefit from a sustainable agenda-attention level during its life-cycle. As such, we can observe a formation of inter-agenda bargaining process as different departments and agencies are competing for limited resources to keep their actionable policy areas, individual policies, topical events and worldwide locations at the top-end of the continuum. This tier-II agenda-setting process reflects how actionable items are in a constant state of reprioritisation as their ranking order fluctuates along the agenda-continuum in response to changing institutional preferences and external factors. Therefore, the *GOV.uk* agenda-attention continuum could be compared to *Kingdon's 'primaeval soup of ideas'*, whereby the actionable government priorities are positioned along the spectrum to gradually 'soften up' within the context of their respective policy cluster until the conditions for their reprioritisation are materialised within the new policy window.

With the complete agenda-attention continuum in place, if asked which actionable government priority was at the top and the bottom end of the continuum between 2010 and 2016, we can easily answer that question by referring to our policy clusters (see figure 6-2). We can start with the agenda-shapers by explaining that the perceived departmental hierarchy is closely related to one's mandate and activity type. At the end of the continuum, we have the *Foreign and Commonwealth Office* at the number one spot with 11,297 info-flows and on the other end the *Office of the Leader of the House of Lords* with just eight info-flows. While we

may not be surprised that the *FCO* is occupying the very top place due to its extensive mandate - maintaining a relationship with 237 worldwide locations on behalf of the *UK* government and providing policy and operational platform for its vast diplomatic network; we are aware that its ranking order is influenced by the number of travel-alerts, press releases and news stories it publishes each year. This means that 67.76% of its info-flows are related to the communicative nature of the agenda-attention process and that its external agenda-attention-market-share is responsible for 9.19% of the overall *GOV.uk* output. In sharp contrast, we find *OLHL* with a very limited mandate and type of activity that will never materialise a significant amount of agenda-attention. While in this context, we can see a strong correlation between one's mandate and the ranking order, not to say that this power balance is exercised in practice.

As we move down the list, we can see that the *UK economy* is a dominant feature in policy areas with its 13,496 info-flows and impressive 11.34% external agenda-attention-market-share. Although one is not surprised by this revelation, we were undoubtedly puzzled as to why the *Financial services* representing the core of the *UK's* service economy are in the last place with just 560 info-flows. This is a perfect example of how our methodology and approach to constructing an agenda-attention continuum prove to be a valuable resource for future research as they can potentially highlight signals that may not be noticed in a similar context. Even though they are on polar opposites, these two policy areas share two interesting characteristics. They have both reached their peak-year in 2015, and the majority of info-flows are associated with the *Announcements* collection (55.89%). This contrasts with our macro-benchmarks that place 2014 as the year with the most active *Supply-output* and the *Publications* as a dominant collection. This is another example of how the reprioritisation process works in practice and how agenda-perspectives can provide us with valuable insights.

We encounter the Road network and traffic as the top priority for the government with its 3,509 info-flows regarding individual policies. Let us consider the importance of transport for trade and supply chains. Its position on the continuum is well aligned with the overall preference for the economy-related segments such as economy, employment, international trade, business and prosperity as they tend to congregate at the Top 25% end of the continuum. As such, the ranking order results tend to support general claims that this cluster of policies remains at the epicentre of the government's attention. While at the very bottom end of the list, we find the *Civil justice reform* with a single info-flow. If observing this arrangement solely from the macro perspective, one may conclude that the government has

| Policy Cluster | Highest ranking actionable government priority | Lowest ranking actionable government priority |
|---|---|---|
| 24+2 Departments | Foreign & Commonwealth Office (n11,297 – Ext. AAMS: 9.19%) | Office of the Leader of the House of Lords (n8 – Ext. AAMS: 0.006%) |
| 47 Policy Areas | UK economy (n13,946 – Ext. AAMS: 11.34%*) | Financial services (n560 – Ext. AAMS: 0.45%*) |
| 219 Individual Policies | Road network and traffic (n3,509 – Ext. AAMS: 2.85%) | Civil justice reform (n1 – Ext. AAMS: 0.0008%) |
| 49 Topical Events | UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit) Scottish independence referendum (n167 – Ext. AAMS: 7.78% each) | Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross overseas recipients UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017 (n2 – Ext. AAMS: 0.001% each) |
| 237 Worldwide Locations | Afghanistan (n700 – Ext. AMMS: 0.56%) | Saint-Barthélemy St Martin (n0 – Ext. AAMS: 0%) |

| Policy Cluster | Agenda-Attention gap between the Top and Bottom entry |
|---|---|
| 24+2 Departments | 199.71% |
| 47 Policy Areas | 181.10% |
| 219 Individual Policies | 199.88% |
| 49 Topical Events | 197.61% |
| 237 Worldwide Locations | 200.00% |

**Legend:** Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (external-facing - when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898 and *internal-facing when compared to 219 Individual Policies – n71,837 info-flows*)

Info-flow figures for the Policy Areas cluster result from the 'multiplication' effect, as there are more info-flows assigned to this cluster than there are in the overall GOV.uk Supply-output (n122,898). This means that 52,149 info-flows are associated with more than one policy area.

**Figure 6-2:** Comparing first and last actionable items for all five policy clusters (total number of info-flows, the external agenda-attention-market-share and the percentage difference between two entries). Source: www.GOV.uk

no interest in this area. By definition, this is true, but we can understand the background story in more detail when we look at the micro-data. A forensic analysis of a single info-flow has exposed a more profound political connotation for such state of affairs – one that exposes conflicting priorities among the coalition partners, the unfortunate timing of the policy launch just before 2015 national elections and its ultimate demise following the change of government which has ended the coalition arrangement. Again, the methodology's flexibility to switch between macro and micro-data analysis allows us to identify a valuable signal among the noise and provide a more contextual rationale for such patterns.

While the topical events, with their temporal-agenda features and fixed life-cycle, are not reflective of the six years, they are valuable when trying to understand how government prioritises issues as not every anniversary, conference or humanitarian response was awarded

this amplified status. As we look at the Top 25% domain, we find the *UK Presidency of G8 2013 (G8 dementia summit)* and *the Scottish independence referendum co-sharing a number one spot with 167 info-flows*. While it is difficult to understand how an international summit can be on the same level as a referendum which almost broke the union when we calculate their life-cycle, we can see that the *G8 summit* had a distinct advantage due to its 1,321 days of agenda-amplification in contrast to the referendum's 730 days. Even though they differ in terms of interconnective complexity (*G8 summit* had three and the *Referendum* just one associated department), 80% of their info-flows belong to the *Announcement* collection, suggesting a strong emphasis on amplifying the communicative-agenda across the spectrum. At the end of the continuum, we encounter a '*Remembering WW1 Victoria Cross'* overseas recipients and the '*UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017'* events in the last place mainly because they were late entrants to the list and their continuing active status past our cut-off date. In general, we could say that the split between national and international events appears to be equally split between the two domains, although some exhibit transboundary characteristics.

Lastly, we reflect on 237 worldwide locations where we find *Afghanistan* at number one spot with 700 info-flows and two small island-states of *Saint-Barthélemy* and *St Martin* at the bottom-end of the continuum zero associated info-flows. In contrast to some other policy areas, we are not surprised to find such configuration as *Afghanistan* was a high-profile case since the *9/11 Terrorist Attacks* in the USA, while the two small islands are improbable locations to attract the attention unless it is relating to the humanitarian crisis. However, when we looked at more granular data, we could see that even its agenda attention was rapidly declining from 2014, marked by the withdrawal of the British troops from the country. Sadly, we are also reminded that the large percentage of those info-flows were related to *Fatality notices*, hence why we see such a drop in the agenda-attention. Overall, we could detect that proximity was not a crucial variable for securing a place within the Top 25% priority domain. It appears that the size of the country, its geopolitical relevance, security status, economic alignment and historical links are more dominant features than geographic coordinates.

Although there are many differences between the top and bottom-ranked actionable government priorities, the most striking one was the sheer agenda gap between them. We have detected a percentage difference between 181.10% (policy areas) and 200.00%
is classified as an actionable government priority, it is improbable that it will receive a sustainable agenda-attention frequency during its life-cycle. Such disparity sends a clear signal that even though an issue is classified as an actionable government priority, it is improbable that it will receive a sustainable agenda-attention frequency during its life-cycle.

| Policy Cluster | Total number of Info-Flows | Top 25% info-flows | Middle 50% info-flows | Bottom 25% info-flows |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24+2 Departments | 94,651 | 42,952 | 49,895 | 1,804 |
| 47 Policy Areas | 175,047* | 88,720 | 77,844 | 8,483 |
| 219 Individual Policies | 71,837 | 45,079 | 23,678 | 3,080 |
| 49 Topical Events | 2,146 | 1,372 | 659 | 115 |
| 237 Worldwide Locations | 15,335 | 10,788 | 4,181 | 366 |

*Policy Areas multiplication effect

| Policy Cluster | Combined | Top 25% | | Middle 50% | | Bottom 25% | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | External AAMS* | Internal AAMS | External AAMS | Internal AAMS | External AAMS | Internal AAMS | External AAMS |
| 24+2 Departments | 77.01% | 45.37% | 34.94% | 52.71% | 40.59% | 1.90% | 1.46% |
| 47 Policy Areas** | 142.43% | 50.68% | 72.18% | 44.47% | 63.34% | 4.84% | 6.90% |
| 219 Individual Policies | 58.45% | 62.75% | 36.68% | 32.96% | 19.26% | 4.28% | 2.50% |
| 49 Topical Events | 1.74% | 63.93% | 1.11% | 30.70% | 0.53% | 5.35% | 0.09% |
| 237 Worldwide Locations | 12.47% | 70.34% | 8.77% | 27.26% | 3.40% | 2.38% | 0.29% |

*We only have External AAMS for the combined total because the internal will always be 100%

** Policy Areas external AAMS is presented at the maximum range

**Legend:** Red-coloured table cells and figures represent the highest value in that constellation

AAMS: Agenda-Attention-Market-Share (external-facing - when comparing to all GOV.uk Info-Flows – n122,898 and *internal-facing when compared to 219 Individual Policies – n71,837 info-flows*)

Please note that the info-flow figures for the Policy Areas cluster result from the 'multiplication' effect, as there are more info-flows assigned to this cluster than there are in the overall GOV.uk Supply-output (n122,898). This means that 52,149 info-flows are associated with more than one policy area.

**Figure 6-3:** Comparing the internal and external agenda-attention-market-share for all five policy clusters regarding their association with Top 25% - Middle 50% - Bottom 25% priority ranking domains. Source: www.GOV.uk

In conclusion, we can state that the agenda-attention-market-share (AAMS) is highly biased towards the actionable government priorities in the Top 25% domain. While we accept the logic that the top-ranking attracts a high frequency of the agenda-attention, we did not expect to see such strong divergence between the top and bottom-end of the continuum (see figure 6-3). For example, the Top 25% items were responsible for a staggering 70.34% of all the info-flows within that policy clusters regarding the *Worldwide Locations*. A trend that applies to all other clusters, albeit at different levels – although they all have an internal AAMS factor of 50%+ except for the 24+2 departments who remain at 45.37%. We see such intense concentration of the agenda-attention at the Top 25%, but we also detect that those at very top-of-the-top (first 3-5 items) tend to be responsible for most of the *Supply-output* within the respective priority domain. A good example is the *FCO* with an internal AMMS share of 11.93% or the *UK economy* policy area with an external AAMS share of up to 11.34%. Hence, why the analytical focus was on the top/bottom entry and the divergence between the Top 25% and Bottom 25% domains.

## co-Creating a Shared Agenda-Research Value

From the beginning, we wanted to show how resourceful *GOV.uk* data and framework can be for the agenda research. In the process, we have tried to showcase different 'data-chambers', research protocols, and perspectives hoping that they will inspire future researchers to expand on our propositions. While our research design was structured in response to a detailed analysis of how we can contextualise the portal, information, and its dynamics, some of the elements were accidental discovery through our data visualisation and analysis. Sadly, we could not address all the opportunities, and it may be helpful to highlight several research areas that deserve more attention and can be achieved using our methodology framework.

### *Dashboard approach to data collection and analysis:*

We could say that supply and demand dynamics are in a constant state of flux as institutional preferences and public attentiveness to actionable government priorities can change on an annual, monthly, and daily basis. Therefore, real-time monitoring of the *GOV.uk* platform can enable both the researchers and the policymakers to be more in tune with shifting agendas and use those indicators as early warning signals. As such, we would hope that the *GDS* team would generate an Agenda-Attention Dashboard with real-time data that researchers can customise to fit their research framework in partnership with academic institutions. Such an approach would increase academic capacity to be more interactive with data – to respond to agenda fluctuations in real-time. Furthermore, a *Dashboard*-approach to collecting, formatting, visualising and analysing data could minimise disruptions to research protocol when changes to organisational and knowledge management protocol affect the portal's configuration.

### *Interconnectivity = Complexity?*

In addition to measuring the agenda-attention frequency, we also have the opportunity to map out and visualise all the connections between different actionable government priorities, policy clusters and agenda-shapers. The networked effect of that information could explain a degree of complexity attached to the *UK Policymaking* for different areas, policies, events and locations. It would be interesting to compute if a degree of policy complexity is correlated with the number of attachments, associations and overlaps that an 'actionable' item or department has with other policy domains. Those patterns can then be compared with the agenda-attention ranking order to determine the level of (re) Prioritisation when complexity is introduced into the equation. Equally, it would be interesting to determine if the agenda-

attention and interconnectedness are mutually inclusive – to be at the top of the list, do you also have to have the most complicated policy configuration?

### *Changing Agenda-Perspective and (re)prioritisation factor:*

As part of our model, we have introduced three agenda-perspectives: *Aggregated, Coordinative* and *Communicative*. In the process, we wanted to show that the priority order of actionable government priorities may change if observed from a different context. While the aggregated perspective will always serve as a baseline benchmark when determining the primary ranking order and the 'agenda-attention-market-share' protocol, it will not provide us with a holistic picture. That is why we advocate for a multi-perspective approach when analysing a single policy domain or making comparable observations across different clusters. In order to build a more comprehensive picture of the agenda process, we need to introduce additional perspectives, and we hope that future research would address a gap in the market. For example, by focusing on the annual or monthly percentage change, one can establish a ranking order based solely on 'extreme' punctuations. Whereby, we rank actionable government priorities and agenda-shapers based on their sudden and extreme agenda-attention fluctuations. We can call that a *Punctuated Agenda-Perspective.* However, many more options need to be tested and presented as we seek to build a model that can test the resilience of the agenda-attention in different contexts.

### *To Nowcast or Forecast, that is the question?*

The *GOV.uk* is now almost nine years old, and it hosts data stretching back to May 2010, which makes it one of the largest depositories of government information. Furthermore, the search filters allow us to identify 'info-flows' and 'pageviews' on an annual, monthly or daily context. Such flexibility and adaptability allow us to assess historical records or interact with data in real-time. As governments are struggling to monitor the policy horizon for early-warning signals and make accurate predictions, there is an opportunity for researchers to use the *GOV.uk* data to accomplish both. Whether to *Nowcast* or *Forecast* is a question that many researchers struggle with, primarily because of difficulties securing reliable and sustainable data. While the real-time analysis can attract media and government's attention, there is always a risk of misplacing the contextual element that the retroactive approach can expose. On the other hand, one can only make reliable forecasts if it can analyse large datasets and develop a modelling formula that can identify cyclical patterns or account for conditions responsible for sudden punctuations. Either way, both concepts are in great demand, and we are assured that the GOV.uk data and organisational framework can provide researchers with a platform to make interactive and proactive forecasts.

***Sustaining 'Open-meets-Digital' research opportunity:***

For all the above ideas to materialise, one crucial element needs to be in place – a partnership between the *GDS* team, academia, *CivicTech* activists, media, think-tanks and the *Technology* sector. Good ideas and creativity flourish in a multidisciplinary setting, and for that to function, we need to have sustainable access to information that is open, standardised, uniformed, and digitally fit for repurposing. If we are to designate centralised government portals like the *GOV.uk* to be a source of information for the agenda-attention research, one needs to ensure that the *GDS* team is not operating in isolation from other parties that operate in the 'Open-meets-Digital' construct. Sudden and significant changes to the *GOV.uk* portal can seriously disrupt a multidisciplinary approach to utilising its 'data-chambers' to nowcast and forecast institutional preferences and public attentiveness.

In the process, we want to highlight five key things that researchers should consider when engaging with the *'Open-meets-Digital'* construct and *GOV.uk* portal:

1. Focus on collecting-formatting-visualising macro data to expose patterns and signals that can help you identify areas of interest that require more detailed analysis. Data visualisation and necessary colour coding can expose connections that may not be obvious when analysing text and numbers;

2. Data standardisation is essential if you want to compare different agenda groups and actionable government priorities while using different 'research currencies';

3. Do not accept aggregated ranking order as the final statement on how agenda-attention is distributed. Always try to introduce additional agenda-perspective to determine if the 'actionable' ranking order remains stable in different settings;

4. Every 'data-chamber' will expose how actionable government priority is interconnected with other elements. Those links may not be relevant, but if adequately contextualised, they can expose the complexity of the policymaking process, which may not be visible even to the policymakers; *and*

5. Most importantly, do not be afraid of data. One does not have to know complex software programmes or be a data scientist to interact with open-big-digital data.

While it is expected that centralised government portals need to evolve and adapt to the latest trends, we are arguing that the upgrade protocol should be a result of a collaboration and consultations outside the government's digital bubble. In that way, any changes to *GOV.uk* knowledge management and/or user interface would be less disruptive. Therefore, the time has come for all parties to collaborate and seek to co-create the agenda research value when *'Open-meets-Digital.'*

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**THE END**