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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the influence of agenda setters in the European Parliament (EP) by focusing on the role of the rapporteur. The EP represents citizens of the European Union as one of the EU’s two legislative bodies, sharing legislative powers with the Council of the European Union. EP committees allocate legislative proposals of the European Commission to a committee member, a so-called rapporteur, who drafts a report on the proposal. If legislators pursue the policies, their voting behaviour will vary depending on the policy implications of the item up for vote, as well the compatibility of their policy preferences with those of the agenda setter. As these two factors of legislative voting share a common source of motivation (i.e., policy interests) but may drive different voting behaviour, it is important to understand the relative weight of their influence in order to investigate the influence of agenda setters. After examining the EP amendments and the corresponding roll call votes of the members of the European Parliament, this paper finds that EP rapporteurs have constrained but substantial agenda-setting power as conditional trustees for MEPs.

Keywords: European Parliament, Agenda Setting, Roll Call Vote, Co-Decision, European Union

I. Introduction

What makes a legislator vote in a particular way? While the literature in the legislative studies has addressed this question frequently (see Cox and McCubbins, 2005; Crombez et al., 2000; Garrett and Tsebelis, 1996; Garrett et al., 2001; Shackleton and Raunio, 2003), it has ignored one important factor: the interactions between the content of voting items and the agenda setters who produce them. Given that legislative voting is the most direct way for legislators to pursue their policy interests, neglecting to regard the very subject of such policy-seeking behaviour, i.e., voting items, as an important factor in their decisions represents a serious gap in the literature. When legislators pursue...
policies, their voting behaviour varies depending on the extent to which the adoption of the item will promote their policy interests. Also, who shapes these voting items—i.e. the characteristics of the agenda setter—is an important element for legislators in making their voting decisions. If the agenda setter has similar policy interests to theirs, they are more likely to vote for it. As these two possible factors of legislative voting share a common source of motivation—i.e. policy interests—but may drive different voting behaviour, it is important to understand the relative weight of their influence by understanding the policy-seeking mechanism.

This paper aims to examine the influence of the agenda setter in the European Parliament (EP) by focusing on the role of rapporteur. The EP represents European Union citizens as one of the EU’s two legislative bodies. It shares legislative powers with the Council of the European Union (i.e. the Council of Ministers before the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009), the other legislative body representing EU member states. EP committees allocate legislative proposals of the European Commission to a committee member, a so-called rapporteur, who drafts a report on the proposal. This paper focuses on the role of rapporteurs.

There are three main legislative procedures in the EU: consultation, cooperation, and codecision procedures (i.e. the “ordinary legislative procedure” renamed by the Lisbon Treaty). As the EP’s opinion is literally consultative for the Commission and the Council under the consultation procedure, the EP has real influence over the final legislative outcome only under the cooperation and codecision procedures. After the Amsterdam Treaty, which reformed the codecision procedure, came into force it has the greatest power under the codecision procedure as the co-legislator of the Council.

In a nutshell, under the codecision procedure a legislative act goes through the following steps: (i) the Commission submits its legislative proposal to the EP and Council, (ii) the EP places amendments on the proposal (the EP 1st reading), (iii) the Council adopts the so-called “Common Position”, (iv) the EP issues its opinion on the Common Position (the EP 2nd reading), (v) the Commission incorporates the EP’s amendments from the 2nd reading and the Council’s Common Position, (vi) the Council decides whether to adopt the EP’s amendments from the 2nd reading, (vii) if the Council fails to accept the EP’s amendments, the EP and the Council decide the final legislation after the intervention of the “conciliation committee” (Art. 251 EC, ex Art. 189b), (viii) the EP and Council respectively vote on the outcome of the conciliation committee. The cooperation procedure proceeds almost the same as the codecision procedure up to stage (vi), after which the Council unilaterally make decisions on legislation.

An EP rapporteur is a primary agenda setter for the EP’s position in the EU legislative process where the EP has the power of approving and amending the legislative proposal submitted by the Commission. A rapporteur plays a significant role in the second stage of the legislative process, the so-called “EP first reading.” In the first reading, the EP places amendments on the Commission’s proposal before the Council of Ministers act. For example, upon receiving the Commission’s legislative proposal, the EP president assigns a “committee responsible” in the relevant policy area to present a

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1 The EP had long pressed for its independent right to initiate legislation until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. It dropped this request in the negotiation for the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.
report on the proposal to the plenary. This committee appoints a rapporteur to write a report on its behalf and votes on the report with some amendments, if necessary, before presenting it to the plenary. (For the appointment of rapporteurs, see Yoshinaka et al., 2011 and Lindberg, 2008). Other relevant committees are allowed to present their opinions on the Commission’s proposal to the EP plenary. At the plenary, the Members of EP (MEPs) vote on those amendments presented by the responsible committee as well as other amendments placed by other committees and a group of MEPs. Even though a rapporteur’s report is subject to the approval of a committee before being tabled as a committee report to the plenary, and other actors can propose amendments, the rapporteur is still in an advantageous position to gather information and build a legislative coalition as a solely assigned actor to make the basis for the EP’s position.

This paper argues that EP rapporteurs have constrained but substantial agenda-setting power to be a conditional trustee for the MEPs (e.g. Costello and Thomson, 2010). The power of the rapporteur is limited in the sense that the open rule of tabling amendments at the EP plenary reduces the rapporteur’s agenda-setting power to manipulate the process of shaping the EP’s position. However, it is not negligible because in a highly complex legislative environment with considerably technical legislation, the EP needs to have an internal actor to provide expertise on the legislative proposals and information on successful legislative coalitions including the possible legislative majorities in the EP and the Council (Yordanova, 2011).

To examine the role of the rapporteur as an agenda setter, this paper proceeds as follows. First, four types of agenda setters are presented according to their powers. In the next section, these agenda setters are tested by analysis of the EP roll call votes dataset, which contains all roll call votes on the amendments adopted in the first reading of the cooperation and codecision procedures between January 1995 and June 1999. The first reading of the EP under the two procedures is selected because both the rapporteur and the MEPs can act in the least constrained fashion at that stage. The reasons are three-fold. First, the EP has real power under the cooperation and codecision procedures. Second, unconstrained by the Council’s position, MEPs are expected to be more expressive in the first reading than in the second. Finally, as the positions of the MEPs are not yet firmly made and/or announced public, as the first one to act a rapporteur has the greatest scope to explore possible legislative coalitions that will support amendments to maximize policy interests.

II. Four Types of Agenda Setters

Agenda setting has long been a topic of legislative studies (see Hix, Noury and Roland, 2007; Cox and McCubbins, 2005). Although studies of agenda control have been mentioned more in the area of the executive as opposed to the legislative, it also enables those who have agenda-setting power within a legislative chamber, such as the committees and the rapporteurs, to pursue their policy interests more easily than others. In addition, if the content is not in line with their policy preferences, agenda setters can prevent bills or amendments from being initiated in the first place, stop them being voted on in the plenary, or prevent them from being presented for the bicameral negotiations.
Thus, agenda control empowers those who hold it or allocate positions for agenda setting. However, the power of agenda setting significantly decreases when multiple agenda setters exist. For example, under the open rule, agenda setters must compete with each other to win enough votes to adopt a bill. Furthermore, it is necessary to get a majority of legislators for the passing of a provision of the most preferred bill at the plenary. This makes it difficult for agenda setters to manipulate the agenda towards their preferred policy outcomes.

Nonetheless, the reduced power of agenda setters does not necessarily increase the possibility for other legislators to pursue their own policy interests in the plenary. Under the majority rule, when an issue is multi-dimensional, both agenda setters and other legislators are uncertain about a final voting outcome because of vote cycling. In fact, it is one of the major reasons for the delegation of agenda-setting power to other actors, such as standing committees, the Commission and rapporteurs, to reduce this uncertainty. In this regard, the open rule is a double-edged sword. While lowering the risk for agenda setters to pursue their own policy interests against the legislative majority, it also reduces the efficiency gains due to the delegation of agenda setting.

Therefore, albeit under open rules, legislators have an incentive to support bills presented by agenda setters more than bills presented by other legislators. Agenda setters tend to have more expertise in a given bill and know possible winning coalitions in the plenary. With limited information on other legislators’ behaviour and little policy expertise, it is reasonable for other legislators to support the position that agenda setters take, if an agenda setter shows similar policy interests with them.

This leads to a question concerning how much power an agenda setter can muster when directing policy outcomes toward certain policy preferences. Depending on the extent of his/her influence, an agenda setter can be categorized into one of the following four types: (i) unconditional trustee; (ii) conditional trustee; (iii) honest broker; and (iv) powerless agent. An agenda setter is an unconditional trustee when he or she has the power to pass agenda without providing specific policy gains for other legislators. Other legislators vote for the voting item because they believe the agenda setter shares their policy preferences in overall policy issues and sets the legislative agenda in line with their policy interests. A conditional trustee enjoys the trust of other legislators in a more limited fashion. Compatibility of policy preferences between an agenda setter and other legislators is not sufficient for other legislators to support an agenda setter’s bill. The bill also needs to specifically enhance their policy interests. The third type of agenda setter plays the role of an honest broker if the legislative agenda can increase legislators’ policy gains. An agenda setter’s legislative agenda gains support among legislators whose expectations are based on better policy outcomes rather than on similar policy preferences. Finally, an agenda setter becomes powerless when he/she has no influence on a legislator’s vote.

III. Hypotheses

The aim of this research is to examine whether rapporteurs at the EP are unconditional trustees, conditional trustees, honest brokers or powerless agents. This paper argues that
an EP rapporteur is a conditional trustee because of his/her policy expertise and the existence of open rules. On the one hand, rapporteurs are in an advantageous position to accumulate expertise on the given policy area and to build credibility for consensus among MEPs and negotiate with the Commission and the Council to secure the passage of a bill (Benedetto, 2005; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2001). On the other, because of open rules, which allow other agenda setters to table amendments along with rapporteur’s, MEPs are not bound to support the rapporteur’s option of amendments. Agenda setters compete to attract support for their amendments. Competition among agenda setters gives legislators more information on a bill and enlarges the number of possible legislative coalitions to pass it. With more choices presented by bigger number of agenda setters, MEPs have more options for the bill.

The most direct way of investigating the power of an agenda setter would be to compare the actual vote with the likely vote without the involvement of an agenda setter. Recognising that this test is impossible to conduct, the paper takes an alternative test. It attempts to examine the voting behaviour of MEPs on an amendment, one which is presented by a rapporteur, and one which is not.

More specifically, two hypotheses are suggested in order to identify the type of agenda setter.

**Hypothesis 1:** A legislator [An MEP] is more likely to vote for an agenda [amendment] tabled by an agenda setter [the rapporteur] when the difference between the former’s ideal policy position and the latter’s ideal policy position is small.

**Hypothesis 2:** A legislator [An MEP] is more likely to vote for an agenda [an amendment] to the degree to which it is expected to advance his or her preferred policy outcomes.

Hypothesis 1 examines the influence of a rapporteur on the legislative behaviour of MEPs. On the assumption that both MEPs and rapporteurs are policy seekers, they have interests in promoting their policy interests in the legislative process. Although constrained by the necessity to have approval from the committee responsible, the majority of MEPs in the EP plenary, and eventually the Commission and the Council of Ministers, the rapporteur has an interest in drawing the legislative outcome as close to his/her policy preferences as possible to be passed through the legislative process. The rapporteur has an incentive to set a legislative agenda that maximizes policy interests from the final legislative outcome. Knowing this, MEPs expect to benefit from the rapporteur’s agenda to the degree with which policy preferences are compatible with the rapporteur’s. Therefore, the MEP is more likely to support the rapporteur’s agenda because they share more policy preferences.

Second, the policy implications of amendments influence MEPs’ voting decisions. Having diverse views on the ideal policies for the EU, MEPs make their decisions on the amendments in order to gain their preferred policy outcomes. If the amendments are expected to enhance their policy interests, MEPs are likely to vote for them.

Table 1 suggests the summary of expectation. For instance, if the EP rapporteur is a conditional trustee, both Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 should hold true. If it is an
unconditional trustee, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed but Hypothesis 2 is not. If an agenda setter is an honest broker, Hypothesis 1 is rejected while Hypothesis 2 should be confirmed. If the agenda setter plays a role of a powerless agent, neither Hypothesis 1 nor Hypothesis 2 are confirmed. In this case, it is likely that legislators and rapporteurs are disciplined by various organisations, such as parties.

Table 1: Influence of Four Types of Agenda Setters in Legislative Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of rapporteur</th>
<th>Unconditional trustee</th>
<th>Conditional trustee</th>
<th>Honest broker</th>
<th>Powerless agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 1</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 2</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected confirmation of hypotheses

Hypothesized Influence of the variables

Policy difference between MEP and rapporteur

Policy impact of amendment

Policy change on regulation
× Left-right ideology
Insignificant
- - - Insignificant

Policy change on Left-right
× Left-right ideology
Insignificant
- - - Insignificant

Policy change on EU integration
× EU integration
Insignificant
+ + + Insignificant

Policy change on Environment
× Environment
Insignificant
+ + + Insignificant

The next section presents the method of identifying the policy implications of amendments adopted by roll calls and the agenda setters of those amendments. The study notes that rejected amendments are excluded in the analysis because the EP does not publish the contents of rejected amendments. The four policy areas examined are as follows: market regulation, European integration, left-right ideology, and environment. The combination of detailed analysis of legislation and corresponding roll call votes on the legislation will unearth the relative impact of voting items and their agenda setters on MEPs’ voting behaviour.

IV. Agenda Setters’ Agendas

A coding scheme for EP amendments has been devised. The default outcome of a roll call vote on an EP amendment in the first reading is the corresponding text in the Commission proposal. If an amendment is not adopted by a simple majority of the votes cast in the EP plenary, the EP will adopt the corresponding part proposed by the Commission without any change. In other words, voting against an amendment is equivalent to voting for the text proposed by the Commission. What is voted on is the difference between the text proposed by the Commission and the amendment placed on it by the EP. That is, the implication of the difference is to be coded if one is to study roll call votes on the EP first reading amendments. Therefore, this study codes the EP amendments in comparison with the Commission’s proposals (c.f. see Franchino, 2002).
To code the difference is to find out the direction in which the EP moves the possible policy outcomes on three policy issue dimensions. For this purpose, the coding scheme is based on the Manifesto Research Group coding scheme available from Budge et al. (2001) and one by Gabel and Hix (2002) for identifying the policy dimensions and directions. It should be noted with a degree of caution that the item of one roll call vote may contain more than one issue. The item of one roll call vote may fall into many categories of the issues of the votes.

On the method of coding, four issue categories are created to code each amendment. Literature on the EU points out that there are three policy dimensions in EU politics: the traditional left-right ideological dimension, the market regulation dimension, and the pro-anti integration dimension (Hix 1999). Taking this view, this paper utilizes categories for left-right issues, market regulation issues and European integration issues which Budge et al. (2001) and Gabel and Hix (2002) utilized for their coding scheme. In addition, the paper codes whether or not the amendment increased the level of environmental protection.

One should keep in mind that some amendments contain texts that conflict in terms of policy direction. For instance, one sentence in an amendment increases the market regulation and another sentence in the same amendment decreases it. In this case, it is difficult to say whether the EP amendment changes the Commission’s proposal toward a more or less regulatory direction. In addition, there are some amendments that are too technical to categorise. Other amendments simply change terms in the Commission’s proposal. The study codes all these as “neutral.”

With this coding scheme, the paper has coded the EP amendments in all the first reading EP amendments under the cooperation and codecision procedures adopted between January 1995 and September 1999. The amendments coded here do not represent the whole picture of the EP amendments on the Commission’s proposal. They include only those taken by roll call vote. (For the differences between the Commission’s policy preferences and the EP’s, see Brauninger et al., 2001)

Once the policy implications of the amendment are examined, an agenda setter for the amendment should be identified. The amendments presented to the plenary can have four different groups of agenda setters: the rapporteur, the responsible committee, the EP political groups, and a group of MEPs. Since this paper focuses on the role of rapporteur as an agenda setter, it needs to identify the amendments rapporteurs initiated. For the period of the 4th EP (1994-1999) it is not a straightforward task because the rapporteurs’ report presented to the responsible committee is not available on the EP website. Only those adopted by the committee are available. Although the pertinent reports are named after a rapporteur, the rapporteur’s report adopted by the responsible committee may not necessarily contain those supported by him or her.

To address this problem, amendments initiated by rapporteurs should be identified indirectly. A rapporteur is assumed to be involved as an agenda setter if he/she voted at the plenary whether or not it was included in the report of the responsible committee to the plenary. In other words, a rapporteur is assumed to be involved as an agenda setter for those amendments tabled at the plenary either by the EP political groups or the groups of a minimum number of MEPs if he/she supports them. It is not a strong assumption because a rapporteur can, and indeed does, retable to the EP plenary those
amendments which he/she has failed to have adopted by the committee, usually with the support of their political group. Furthermore, as a rapporteur is at the centre of building a legislative majority for the EP amendments, it is reasonable to assume that few amendments, let alone those supported by the committee responsible, tabled at the plenary have not been informed to the given rapporteur.

In sum, the four groups of amendments are: (i) those not appearing in the responsible committee’s report but those a rapporteur voted for; (ii) those which appeared in the responsible committee’s report and a rapporteur voted for; (iii) those which appeared in the responsible committee’s report and which a rapporteur voted against; and finally (iv) those that did not appear in the responsible committee’s report and which a rapporteur voted against. Those belonging to groups (i) and (ii) will be identified as a rapporteurs’ agenda. Having identified the amendments presented by rapporteurs, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, the relevant hypotheses are tested with the roll call votes separately by the groups in the next section.

### Table 2: Influence of the Rapporteurs over the MEP’s Votes on Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda setter of the amendment</th>
<th>Rapporteur without committee responsible</th>
<th>Rapporteur and committee responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy difference between MEP and rapporteur</td>
<td>-.85***</td>
<td>-.64***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy impact of amendment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on regulation</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Left-right ideology</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on Left-right</td>
<td>-.01***</td>
<td>-.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Left-right ideology</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on EU integration</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×EU integration</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on Environment</td>
<td>.07***</td>
<td>.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Environment</td>
<td>(.01)</td>
<td>(.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>-.65***</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PES</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log likelihood: -5900.54 -5586.72 -10511.24 -10440.23

$X^2(5)^*$

463.71 1092.35 2941.53 3083.48

$(prob > X^2)$

0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000

N (no. of vote decisions)

10521 10521 30880 30880

No. of Groups

31 31 91 91

Note: Dependent variable is voting on an amendment (1 = yes). Fixed-effects (dummy variables) for each vote are included in all models but are not reported. *** = significant at .001 level; ** = significant at .01 level; * = significant at .05 level. Standard errors are in parentheses. $X^2(7)$ for Models 2&4. Standard errors are in parentheses.
Table 3: Influence of Agenda Setters Other than Rapporteurs over MEP's Votes on Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda setter of the amendment</th>
<th>Committee responsible without rapporteur</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variables</strong></td>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>Model 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy difference between MEP and rapporteur</td>
<td>3.80*** (0.09)</td>
<td>3.59*** (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy impact of amendment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on regulation</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Left-right ideology</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on Left-right</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Left-right ideology</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on EU integration</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×EU integration</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy change on Environment</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>×Environment</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-1.09***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PES</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>2.50***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-700.85</td>
<td>-724.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2(5))</td>
<td>1735.77</td>
<td>1688.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{prob} &gt; X^2)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (no. of vote decisions)</td>
<td>2531</td>
<td>2531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable is voting on amendment (1 = yes). Fixed-effects (dummy variables) for each vote are included in all models but are not reported. *** = significant at .001 level; ** = significant at .01 level; * = significant at .05 level. Standard errors are in parentheses. \(X^2(7)\) for Models 6&8. Standard errors are in parentheses.

V. Statistical Analysis: Does ‘Who Sets What’ Matter?

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of analyses of the EP roll call votes. All the votes of each group are pooled as presented in Tables 2 and 3 but separately depending on the type of agenda setter.

1. Variables

Before discussing the results of analyses with roll call votes, the operationalization of variables is explained. In all tables, the dependent variable is a dummy variable showing how each MEP votes.\(^2\) It is coded as 1 if a MEP votes for the EP amendment

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\(^2\) The EP roll call vote dataset in this paper is a part of much bigger one made by Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland. I appreciate Simon Hix for allowing me to use this part of the data.
and otherwise 0. The abstention is excluded from the analysis. Hix, Noury, and Roland (2004) constructed an EP roll call vote dataset covering votes from September 1979 to June 2000.\(^3\) The dataset is used for the dependent variable to examine roll votes taken between January 1995 and August 1999. Once again, the votes on those EP committee reports that are not available from the EP website, and the votes on which the rapporteur abstained, or was absent from, were excluded.

As for the independent variables, for Hypothesis 1, the first variable in the table indicates the differences between policy preferences of individual MEPs and those of a rapporteur. The EP Nominate data by Hix, Noury and Roland (2004) can serve as a substitute for the positions of the MEPs, although they are not exactly preference estimates (Hixon and Wicks, 2000). It indicates the policy difference between each MEP and a rapporteur in the first dimension of the EP Nominate data, which gives different scores to individual MEPs.\(^4\) Roughly speaking, the first dimension of EP Nominate covers the most of voting behaviour of MEPs (Hix et al., 2005). The paper calculates the degree to which the policy position of an MEP is different from that of a rapporteur by taking absolute value of an MEP’s value subtracting from that of the rapporteur.

For Hypothesis 2, the interaction variables examine the impact of the content of each amendment on the MEPs behaviour. The independent variables indicating the MEPs’ characteristics, i.e. their policy positions on each policy dimension, are interacted with the codes of each amendment showing whether it changes the Commission’s proposal in terms of procedural constraints and policy implications. Procedural constraints are inserted in order to control the amendments imposing administrative procedures on the Commission.

To begin with, indicators are made for the policy preferences of MEPs on the four policy issues for which the amendments are coded: market regulation, left-right ideology, EU integration, and environment, using the scores of national parties from the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) estimates by Budge et al. (2001). For indicating the policy preferences of MEPs, the variables ‘left-right position’ and ‘environment’ are adopted from the left-right national party scores from the MRG data. The variable ‘support for EU integration’ is generated by using the national party score on the EU integration scale made by Marks and Steenbergen (2002).\(^5\) They made this score based on their expert survey of national parties. The larger values indicate a more integrative attitude of the MEPs. (For more details of coding scheme, see the appendix)

The indicators of MEPs’ policy preferences are interacted with the policy implications of each amendment so that the interaction variables measure the policy interests brought to each MEP. ‘Policy change on regulation’ indicates the change made by the EP amendment on the issues of market regulation. It is coded as 1 if an amendment increases the level

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\(^3\) The original EP’s voting records are published in the C-Series of *Official Journal of the European Communities/Union*. Hix, Noury, and Roland dataset is available at [http://personal.lse.ac.uk/HIX/HixNouryRolandEPdata.HTM](http://personal.lse.ac.uk/HIX/HixNouryRolandEPdata.HTM).

\(^4\) The EP Nominate data is available at [http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/eprg/data.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/eprg/data.htm). I thank Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland for this data. The data is calculated by using the Nominate scaling method. By analysing roll call votes with the standard logit arithmetics, the method calculates the position of each legislator in multi-dimensional space. For more recent datasets of the EP, see Hoyland, Sircar and Hix (2009).

\(^5\) [http://www.unc.edu/~gwmarks/data.htm](http://www.unc.edu/~gwmarks/data.htm).
of regulation; -1 if decreases it; 0 otherwise. ‘Policy change on EU integration’ and ‘policy change on environment’ are coded in the same way. ‘Policy change on Left-Right’ is coded as -1 if the amendment is more right-wing oriented than the Commission’s proposed text, 1 if it is more left-wing, and 0 otherwise. Interacting these resultant codes of each amendment with MEPs’ characteristics enables one to examine how policy implications of each amendment influence MEPs’ behaviour. For instance, if an amendment changes the Commission proposal less in favour of environment, then the interaction variable ‘policy change on environment×pro-anti environment’ of more pro-environment MEPs have smaller value than that of less pro-environment ones. As Hypothesis 2 predicts, pro-environment MEPs are less likely to vote for an amendment reducing environmental protection, the coefficient of this interaction variable should have a positive sign on the probability for MEPs to vote for these EP amendments.

Finally, two dummy variables for the two largest EP party groups are included in the models 2, 4, 6 and 8. Considering that these EP party groups play a major role in the appointment of ‘rapporteurship’, two dummy variables of the EPP (European People’s Party) group and the PES (Party of European Socialists) group are included in the analysis.

2. Results

With those variables, the hypotheses are tested by using a fixed-effect logit regression model. Instead of a cross-sectional pooled logit regression model, a fixed-effect logit regression model is used to control the possibility of unknown specific effect on the voting decisions of MEPs. It should be noted that the magnitude of the coefficients should not be interpreted as the relative influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable because it does not directly show the marginal effect of the independent variable on a unit basis.

In Table 2, the hypotheses are tested with the roll call votes on those amendments which a rapporteur seemed to play the role of an agenda setter. Models 1 and 2 of the table presents the results of voting on amendments, which the responsible committee did not support, i.e. did not appear in the committee report, but which a rapporteur voted for at the plenary when tabled to the plenary vote by political groups or a group of MEPs. It is reasonable to infer that the majority of a responsible committee and a rapporteur have conflicts over these amendments. Models 3 and 4 show the results of testing the votes on amendments for which both a rapporteur and the committee played the role of agenda setters. This is because a rapporteur voted for them and the committee approved them, which were then incorporated into its report. These amendments result from harmony between the majority of the responsible committee and a rapporteur.

The policy difference between MEPs and a rapporteur confirms Hypothesis 1 that compatibility in the policy preferences with a rapporteur induces MEPs to vote for his/her agenda. The smaller the policy differences between the rapporteur and the MEP, the latter is more likely to vote for the amendment presented by the former. This is valid regardless of whether or not the responsible committee supports the rapporteur’s amendments.
Hypothesis 2 is tested with the four interaction variables on policy change of amendments and policy positions of MEPs. Generally speaking, the hypothesis is confirmed. The leftists MEPs tend to vote for moving the policy towards an increase in market regulation. Changes in the policy on the left-right ideology dimension and the EU integration dimension also motivate MEPs to vote on the amendments along with their policy preferences. It may seem only logical that MEPs vote in favour of changing the policy outcome toward their preferred direction. It is a significant finding, however, since it confirms that the EP first reading is the time for individual MEPs to express their own policy views in their votes rather than trade them when their policy interests are at stake. In another respect, given that MEPs’ policy positions are based on the score of national parties in ideological dimensions, it shows that the national parties pursue their policy interests in the first reading. In other words, in the EP first reading, MEPs and their national parties have room to pursue their policy interests because of less pressure to form a grand coalition internally and to reach a compromise with the Commission and the Council.

Turning to Table 3, the votes analysed in the table are those on the amendments that a rapporteur voted against. Models 5 and 6 examine the votes on the amendments that were tabled by the responsible committee and which a rapporteur voted against at the plenary. These are amendments that the majority of the responsible committee incorporated into the committee report despite a rapporteur’s dissent. Clearly the majority of the responsible committee conflicted with a rapporteur over these amendments. Models 7 and 8 present those supported by neither the responsible committee nor the pertinent rapporteur. A political group or a group of MEPs presented and the rapporteur voted against them at the plenary.

Comparison between Tables 2 and 3 shows the rapporteurs’ role in legislative voting more clearly. The variable “policy difference between MEP and rapporteur” has significant but negative signs in Table 3, contrary to Models 1, 2, 3 and 4. As the rapporteur voted against these amendments, it indirectly confirms Hypothesis 1 that the high compatibility of policy interests between the rapporteurs and MEPs is likely to induce MEPs to support the rapporteurs’ agenda. On agenda which the rapporteur is not in favour of, such as in the case of Table 3, MEPs are also less likely to support them if they share the bigger policy preferences with him/her. Recognising the rapporteur’s policy-seeking behaviour, MEPs are likely to decide their positions on amendments depending on the rapporteur’s position in the legislation.

Hypothesis 2, that MEPs pursue policy interests in their voting on amendments, is also confirmed at Models 7 and 8 in Table 3. The interaction variables on policy preferences and policy change made by the amendments strongly confirm that MEPs’ voting behaviour is issue-sensitive. Policy changes that indicate an increase in market regulation and movement toward leftist ideology induce MEPs from left-wing parties to vote for amendments, which invoke policy changes. It is also the case for environmental policy changes. Clearly, regardless of the characteristics of an agenda setter, MEPs persist in pursuing their own policy interests.

Finally, in Tables 2 and 3, the EP party group dummy variables show an interesting feature of the groups’ varying discipline or cohesion. Except for the amendments which the majority of committee members incorporated against the rapporteurs’ opinion-i.e.
the votes analysed in Models 5 and 6—the Party of European Socialists (PES) group was powerful in pushing their MEPs to vote for the amendments or had relatively strong cohesive ‘preferences’ on the amendments. On the other hand, the European People’s Party (EPP) group was organized as an opposition to the adoption of amendments. Further study is needed to explain why the EP political groups play such contrasting roles in the dynamics between rapporteurs and the committees.

Nonetheless, one can still make an inference concerning the difference between the two groups shown in the votes. The opposite impact of the large party groups is a reflection of there being relatively less institutional pressure imposed by voting rules to form a grand coalition between the ideologically different MEPs. The demand for a grand coalition is low in the EP first reading for two reasons: (i) the simple majority of votes cast rule in the EP first reading; and (ii) the lack of necessity that MEPs from different party groups have for reaching compromises in order to present a united front against the other EU institutions—i.e. the Commission and the Council. The EP tends to treat legislative amendments as internal competition for policy interests while it regards the final resolutions as an external display of its institutional power vis-à-vis the Commission and the Council (Kreppel and Hix 2003).

In sum, the confirmation of both Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 means that rapporteurs are conditional trustees as agenda setters for amendments as expected. The policy preferences of rapporteurs do matter for MEPs to decide their position on those amendments presented or supported by them, as well as those opposed by them. The rapporteurs tend to gain support for their amendments more from those MEPs whose policy preferences are similar to theirs. However, MEPs are also sensitive to the policy implications of the amendments. They tend to vote for those amendments that are expected to enhance their policy interests. Both the agenda setter and the agenda itself influence the legislative voting in the EP.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, three points can be highlighted from this paper. Firstly, rapporteurs pursue their own policy interests by means of setting and screening agenda for amendments. The amendments they support tend to gain support from those MEPs whose policy preferences are more similar to theirs, whereas the amendments not supported by them tend to gain support from those MEPs whose policy preferences are more distant from theirs. Secondly, combining the analysis of the legislative texts with the roll call vote analysis provides further evidence supporting previous studies of the EP roll call votes. These studies argue that the issue dimensions of EU politics are left-right ideology, market regulation and EU integration because the coalitions of MEPs in the roll call votes are formed between those sharing policy interests on these issues. Many EP amendments analysed here concern these policy dimensions and MEPs vote along with their policy interests on these dimensions. Finally, MEPs are issue-sensitive when casting votes. There is no permanent coalition in the EP roll call votes. Pursuing their policy interests, MEPs form diverse legislative coalitions on an issue-by-issue basis. The policy seeking behaviours of MEPs are profound.
This paper can also contribute to the comparative study of legislative agenda setters. The hypotheses can be applied to other legislatures to identify the types of agenda setters and examine the institutional conditions for agenda-setting power. This paper makes the inference that EP rapporteurs are conditional trustees for MEPs because of the demands for legislative expertise and the open rule for tabling amendments. Comparative study of the interaction between the legislative environment in terms of legislative specialisation and agenda setting rules on one hand, and examination of voting behaviour over various legislatures on the other, will examine whether or not this inference is correct.

References


Appendix: Coding Scheme for the Difference between the Commission Proposals and the EP Amendments

1. Regulation dimension
An EP amendment increases regulation if it amends the Commission’s proposal in the following way:

- Removing exemptions from the given rules.
- Introducing additional rules for the actors to follow.
- Adding more detailed rules for the actors to follow.
- Setting higher standards for production process or products.
- Introducing new criteria for production process or products.
- Supporting earlier application of rules.
- Adding more actors to comply the rules.

It decreases regulation if it does the opposite.

2. Left-Right ideology dimension
The coding scheme for this dimension is based on Gable and Hix (2002) and Budge et al. (2000).
An EP amendment is regarded as making the policy outcome favour the leftist ideology if it introduces a sentence or changes the existing one in the Commission’s proposal in favour of the following:

- Increasing budget.
- Pro-public spending.
- Increasing taxes.
- Public ownership.
- Trade protectionism.
- Direct governmental action.
- Concern for unemployment.
- Corporatism.
- Considering efficiency and value for money not as priority.
- Promoting interests of workers and organized labour.
- Promoting equal treatment of individuals.
- Welfare state expansion.
- Education expansion.

An EP amendment is regarded as implying a policy outcome in favour of the rightist ideology if it introduces a sentence or changes the existing one in the Commission’s proposal in favour of the following:

- Free market.
- Reducing budget.
- Tax reform.
- Increase privatisation.
Trade protectionism-opposed.
Pro-free trade.
Direct governmental action-opposed.
Considering efficiency, thrift and value for money as a priority.
Promoting interests of employers and employers’ organization.
Free enterprise.
Incentives to induce enterprise.
Welfare states limitation.

3. EU integration dimension
The coding scheme by Gabel and Hix (2002) provides the basis for this coding scheme. An EP amendment is regarded as making the policy more integrative if it introduces a sentence or changes the existing one in the Commission’s proposal in favour of the following:

Introducing or increasing budget of the European Union.
Introducing regulation at the EU level.
Introducing mutual recognition at the EU level.
Forwarding the date of entering into force of new regulation.
Removing member states’ derogation, reducing its scope or shortening its time period.
General statement of support for EU/goal of European integration.
Support for more power of EP, the European Court of Auditors, single market, macroeconomic policy coordination, tax harmony, common employment policies at the EU level.
Promoting EU external trade policy, EU preferential trade with developing world/development policy, more accountability/transparency in the EU, efforts to reduce the democratic deficit, EU enlargement.

An EP amendment is regarded as making a policy less integrative if it introduces a sentence or changes the existing one in the Commission’s proposal against the above items.

4. Environmental policy dimension
The EP amendments pull the policy toward a more pro-environment one in comparison with the Commission proposals if they introduce or change the proposals in favour of the following:

Strengthening environmental standard.
Introducing new environmental criteria.
Support for faster application of environmental rules.
Support for environmental protection.
Sustainable development.
More environment-friendly policy.
Green politics.
Ecologism.

If the amendments delete or change these items they are considered less pro-environment.