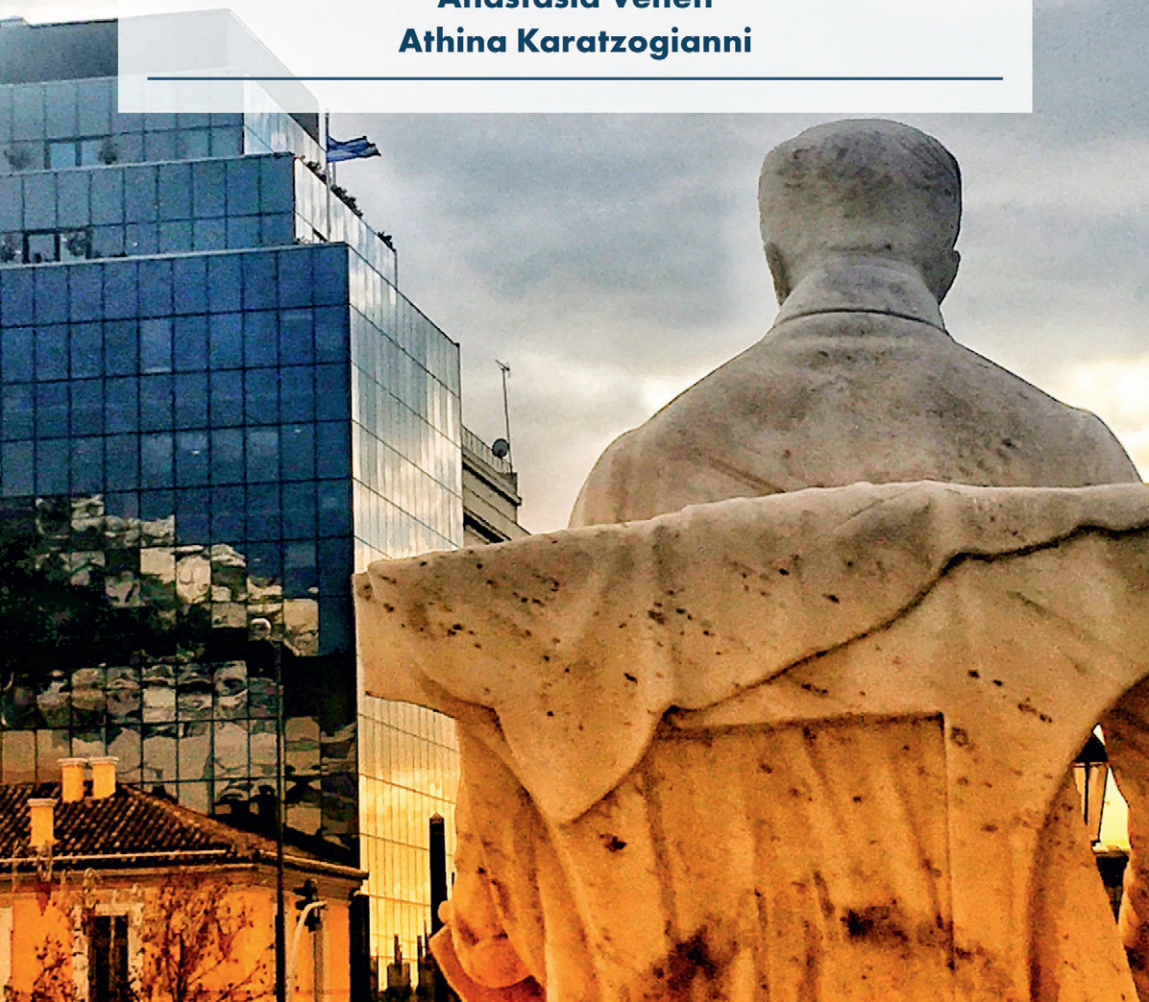


Emerald**Handbooks**

The Emerald Handbook of Digital Media in Greece

Journalism and Political
Communication in Times of Crisis

Edited by
Anastasia Veneti
Athina Karatzogianni



The Emerald Handbook of Digital Media in Greece

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The Emerald Handbook of Digital Media in Greece: Journalism and Political Communication in Times of Crisis

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A comprehensive, well-organised volume, which eloquently weaves the dynamic interplay of digital media and journalism, political communication within the Greek crisis context. The Handbook offers stimulating discussion and contributes prolific research, along with diverse, engaging examples to the understanding of technological, economic, political and social drives at the crossroads.

**Pantelis Vatikiotis, Panteion University of Social and
Political Sciences**

This is an important book for understanding the impact of digital media on the transformation of Greece's political and social landscape over the past decade. Wide-ranging, thought-provoking and lucidly argued, it provides us with valuable insights into the use of new media technologies and their implications for the political process in times of crisis.

**Prof. Dimitris Papadimitriou, Professor of Political Science,
University of Manchester**

A very welcome and much needed collection and synthesis of the current state of digital media, journalism and politics in Greece. While it is often thought that Greek digital journalism and digital politics lags behind those of other European countries, chapters here reveal a vibrant and diverse digital landscape, constituted as a terrain of political, economic, technological and social struggle. It is a pleasure to read contributions from a new generation of media and journalism researchers alongside those of well-known scholars. This volume is a must read for anyone interested in digital media in Greece and beyond, as it establishes the state of the art in digital media research in protracted crisis and sets the agenda for the future.

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To Petros
To Sebastian

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Digital Media in Greece: Journalism and Political Communication in Times of Crisis

Athina Karatzogianni and Anastasia Veneti

This edited volume is a handbook of 26 original chapters providing an innovative and comprehensive contribution to political communication and journalism studies in Greece. It is the first of its kind in the English-speaking world on this subject because it brings together leading and emerging scholars in these fields in a contemporary discussion around the developments brought forward by digital media and communication technologies, specifically addressing political communication and journalism, within the Greek crisis context.

The severe Greek crisis starting from 2009 created an unprecedented interest in Greek history, political culture and society because of its global and European implications. There has been intense coverage and mediatisation of Greece in the international press during a period of accelerated digitisation and disruption of both the global and Greek national news industry. Indeed, Greek political communication and journalism was hit by two major forces: First, the financial crisis, which progressed to an economic, then a political and eventually a social and cultural crisis in Greece. Second, by the transformations and disruptions accelerated due to digital everyday networked technologies impacting news media in Greece at the same period.

In order to capture this double movement, the handbook is divided in four parts. The first part addresses **The Technological: Digital Journalism Transformations** (the political economy of the Internet in Greece, web radio and podcasting, web analytics in journalism, participatory and citizen journalism, professional discourse and digitisation and online news consumption). The second part investigates **The Economic Crisis: Impact on Digital Journalism** (the financial crisis and digital disruption, alternative digital journalism and austerity, journalistic professionalism in crisis, trauma journalism and affective labour, journalistic freedom and self-censorship and self-orientalisation in mainstream media). The third part focuses on **The Political: Elections, Campaigns and Political Discourse** (shifts in political communication historically, branding and

major parties, publicity as an electoral factor, politics of exclusion and polarisation, the rise of SYRIZA and the digital battlefield and three chapters covering Twitter, YouTube and Instagram use by Greek political leaders, respectively). The fourth part examines **The Social: Environment, Homelessness, Migration & Social Movements** (the news framing of immigration and the refugee crisis, media representations of homelessness and street networks, the environmental movement on Twitter, ideology and protest heritage in social media protests).

Part 1: The Technological: Digital Journalism Transformations kicks off with a foundation text to situate the political economy of the Internet in Greece (Chapter 2). Korinna Patelis theorises the Internet in Greece by placing it at the centre of Greek media offering a political economy that recasts it in a culturalist fashion. To achieve this, Patelis critically addresses the country's alleged lag in cyberspace and asks why the Internet's hegemonic role in the advancement of neoliberal policies and technoliberalism worldwide was never performed in Greece. It places the country's wide disdain for the technoliberal subject at the core of understanding of why the web mediations were so neatly denied over three decades across industry, policy and research. It centres around Internet remediations to argue that the Internet in Greece has been conceptualised as a nonmedia through the idea of lagging behind, essentially a construct veiling neoliberalism at work. It situates the advent of the web in Greece's media boom to argue that media power, as articulated in Greece necessarily excluded the web, fetishising terrestrial broadcasting on the way to the neoliberal dismantling of culture, the media and everyday life, way before the Troika.

In **Chapter 3**, Evi Karathanasopoulou investigates web radio and podcasting in Greece, exploring their past, current status and considering possible futures. The analysis begins from broadcast radio in order to explore the, sometimes complex, relationships between traditional and new digital formats, particularly as these exist in an already financially and politically challenging terrain. Through primary and secondary research, this contributor navigates the radio landscape in a country that is now emerging from a long financial crisis. As there is very little writing on Greek podcasting, Karathanasopoulou provides a snapshot of what currently exists and suggests possible functions and creative avenues for it in Greece moving forward.

In **Chapter 4**, Dimitrios Giomelakis and Andreas Veglis offer major findings of two studies regarding the use and impact of SEO and web analytics on news websites and journalism profession in Greece. The journalism profession has radically changed due to the digitisation and the development of new media. As content is moving online, rapidly evolving Internet technologies has affected basic journalistic work processes. In this context, changes in technology as well as audience engagement have greatly expanded the skills required to be a professional journalist nowadays. A number of studies have shown that search engines constitute an important source of the traffic to online news outlets around the world, identifying the significance of top rankings in search results. Concurrently, in the digital age, the interest in monitoring online activities as well as the significance of studying the traffic data has intensified. Through examination of a

sample of Greek journalists and several Greek news websites, it provides new insights in the field of digital journalism.

In their chapter on participatory journalism in Greece, Theodora Saridou and Andreas Veglis produce an analysis based on journalist-centred and audience-based studies (**Chapter 5**). Professional journalism has recently been studied through the lens of audience participation in the production of news online. While initial enthusiasm for democratisation and community reinforcement was significant, empirical evidence points towards unwillingness for fundamental reconstruction of journalistic practices. This chapter aims to map participatory journalism in Greece through the synthesis of accumulated research on the adoption of participatory features and practices in online news media and on audience perspectives of engaging in new roles during news process. Professionals seem hesitant to support a different but the traditional relationship with the users, while even users themselves get involved in activities that require little time and effort, not challenging journalistic norms via creative content production. However, both journalists and audience are positive toward a new collaborative way of managing and exploiting user-generated content, which can support participatory environments that reshape the incorporation of users' contributions in the daily workflows.

In **Chapter 6**, Paschalia (Lia) Spyridou sheds light on whether the participatory journalism can disrupt the field of journalism. The concept of participatory journalism draws attention to the shortcomings of established journalism by emphasising the role of the audience for boosting pluralism, transparency, deliberation and media accountability. Drawing on field theory, Spyridou investigates the level and preferred forms of participation and provides evidence on how users perceive of the participatory affordances offered through news media websites. Although users assign public discourse functions to participatory avenues, the study confirms the reluctant audience paradigm and the popularity of tools enabling low editorial capacity. From a field perspective, it is argued that although users' doxa denotes democratising ideas about participation, their behaviour is ultimately driven by their weak habitus (position) in the field. To use Bourdieu's metaphor, the power in the journalistic game still lies in the hands of professionals; users are not willing or capable of disrupting the norms and practices of mainstream journalism.

Eylem Yanardağoglu contributes a comparative study of online news consumption habits of university students in Greece and Turkey (**Chapter 7**). The challenges of digitalisation on news organisations, future of newspapers and other traditional media present an ongoing struggle. Although there is a general decline in news consumption in all cohorts, youth in specific seems to be 'tuning out' of news globally (Mindich, 2005). The Digital News Report (2016) published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism reported that news accessed via social media sites was increasing in Europe (average 46%), where Greece and Turkey were high adoption countries with 74% and 73% usage rates, respectively. These numbers dropped in the 2018 report to 66% in Turkey and 71% in Greece. This research offers a qualitative analysis of the factors that influence youth's news consumption behaviour Greece and in Turkey. The data collection took

place in 2017 and 2018 in Athens and in Istanbul with voluntary participation of 40 college students who study in public and private universities.

An investigation as to how foreign correspondents perceive digitisation is conducted by Iliana Giannouli in **Chapter 8**. For many decades, foreign correspondents have been regarded as a highly prestigious press corps with the core proposition of bearing witness to events in remote places. However, the advent of the Internet and the new technologies has challenged this position. Citizens living in places where the events occur can make use of a wide range of digital technologies and inform the rest of the world, without the need for the journalist intermediaries who were essential in the past. In addition, the new economic pressures brought to legacy media by the digital technology have paved the way for the rise of a new type of foreign correspondent, the multiskilled staffer, who has to be technologically literate in order to fulfil his daily task. This study based on 51 interviews with foreign correspondents aims at investigating how the foreign correspondents perceive these trends in their daily working routines and if the digital technology has caused a deprofessionalization of the foreign correspondence or we are witnessing the emergence of a new professional discourse which embraces a new core of professional traits.

In **Part 2: The Economic Crisis: Impact on Digital Journalism**, Stylianos Papatthanassopoulos demonstrates that although important players in the Greek Media lost power, and although media changed hands, the majority of media owners still come from other sectors of the economy, principally in shipping, energy, constructions and sports (**Chapter 9**). Greece provides another, although timid, example of how financial crisis and the technological advancements have affected national media systems. In the media sector, the recent financial crisis brought major losses of advertising revenues, while telecommunication companies have entered the field providing the Greeks with triple play services at lower rates. But in one way or another, the main players have remained the same. This chapter investigates the new conditions in the Greek media sector and highlights the consequences of the fiscal crisis in terms of sales, profit losses, decreased advertising spending, salaries and emerging costs.

In **Chapter 10**, Dimitris Boucas and Petros Iosifidis examine how alternative digital journalism operates in the broader context of the austerity economy in Greece. Using as a background the historical interweaving of interests between economic power, political power and media, the chapter explores the current state of digital journalism in Greece and whether it can flourish and serve the ideals of independence, objectivity and pluralism. The Internet provides new possibilities for pluralism in journalism and gives rise to alternative media outlets that purport objectivity and independence from vested economic interests (e.g., advertising) and political pressures. However, the financial sustainability of such ventures is questionable and the regulatory framework in a heavily concentrated Greek media ecology is weak or nonexistent. In this chapter, Boucas and Iosifidis analyse the origins and mission statements of selected cases of alternative digital media outlets/projects, as well as their financing sources and business models. They also discuss sustainability issues and the limits to alternative digital journalism. The chapter's empirical data derive from desktop research, short

structured interviews with academics and longer semistructured interviews with key actors of alternative digital media.

Achilleas Karadimitriou analyses how journalists perceive, assess and manage the crisis of their profession in today's networked media landscape, characterised by unprecedented phenomena such as the rise of churnalism, posttruth journalism and fake news in the context of new trends with regard to how the Greek audience is seeking information and consuming news (**Chapter 11**). Crisis in journalism is a widely discussed and controversial topic in Greece since 2009 when economic recession afflicted the Greek society. However, the last decade of financial hardships and ownership changes in the Greek media sector (2009–2019) gave rise to a widening of perception on the part of journalists of what really crisis stands for when it comes to their profession. While existing research on journalism profession has tended to emphasise the conversion of journalist into a multitasked employee towards audience members who treat journalism with suspicion, the present research, by employing 25 in-depth interviews with Greek leading news media professionals from all types of media outlets (press, television, radio and news websites), focuses on to what extent journalists by themselves are critical of their profession's vulnerabilities. These include the lack of genuine investigative journalism, alienation from the actual reporting based on primary material and manipulation of media professionals within an unstable market. The research gives insights into journalists' opinions and attitudes with regard to the symptoms indicating that journalism in Greece is suffering from chronic and acute crises related to the extraction and dissemination of news, the relationship of journalists with media owners and the operation of the media market.

In **Chapter 12**, Lambrini Papadopoulou and Theodora Maniou assess the trauma that media professionals experience as eyewitnesses of the disturbing and intense events associated with their everyday working routine. In particular, the study examines recent profession-based reports on journalistic trauma to explore affective labour in media ecosystems of crisis-ridden countries and the impact of covering traumatic events on media professionals. Based on qualitative research, this work aims to reconceptualise journalism as a primarily affective profession in the crisis-ridden countries of Southeastern Europe.

Meanwhile, in **Chapter 13**, Christos Kostopoulos investigates journalistic practice in Greece during the period of the memoranda (2010–2015). By focussing on press journalism the research probes journalistic practice and structuration by investigating how communicating with political sources and managing incoming information took place in the significant case of the Greek memoranda. Furthermore, the chapter investigates these practices in order to determine what they can reveal about the Greek press system as well. An innovative multilevel theoretical framework is introduced, which combines insights from political economy and framing theory, in order to shed light on journalistic practice in content production, and media system structures. Original data stemming from 12 semistructured interviews with Greek journalists that covered that memoranda are presented, in order to reveal the structuration of Greek journalism and how the structure of the newspaper constraints journalistic practice in content production and in the collection of information from political sources. The chapter

ultimately argues that Greek press journalism developed in an even further entrenched political role during and postcrisis, due to the political and economic developments of the crisis and their impact in the press system. This entrenched political role had a significant role in how incoming information regarding the memoranda was managed and what kind of options Greek journalists had when constructing news about the case.

This part concludes with Yannis Mylonas's chapter on orientalising and the 'Greek crisis' in liberal mainstream news media (**Chapter 14**). The Greek debt crisis (2009–2018) was an event that received unprecedented media attention worldwide. The media reproduced a highly negative image of Greece, addressing the crisis in exceptionalist terms, usually under a moralistic and culturalist explanatory framework. Drawing on earlier research, this chapter focuses on the culturalist discourses developed by popular Greek mainstream news media, of conservative and liberal political orientation, such as *Kathimerini*, *Athens Voice* and *Protagon.gr*. Through what is understood as a 'self-orientalizing' process, such media tend to reproduce the neoorientalist hegemonic crisis and austerity discursive construction, as enunciated by the EU's political and economic establishment. Under this lens, austerity emerges as a modernising project that would presumably correct Greece's irregularities and would make Greece European and economically competitive for global capitalism. The period studied concerns the years of the crisis between 2010 and 2015. The analysis discloses the classist underpinnings of such discursive repertoires and their antipolitical and antidemocratic character. The analysis also discusses the disciplinary effects of such media practices, which mystify austerity and the processes of expropriation it unfolds, and passivizes civic culture and counterhegemonic resistances, by promoting a collective 'self-bashing' strategy.

In **Part 3: The Political: Elections, Campaigns and Political Discourse**, Anastasia Deligiaouri tracks the changes and shifts in political communication and media democracy landscape in Greece from 1981 to 2019 (**Chapter 15**). The introduction of new communicative ethics in political communication has imposed new procedures and values in politics. The close interrelation of media and politics has many facets and effects on the way politics is exercised and on how it is perceived by the citizens. Deligiaouri investigates how new methods of political communication have been introduced and internalised in Greek politics. By taking into account critical political events and in particular elections and relevant studies, the 'Greek media democracy' is divided into six periods covering a time span from 1981 to the present. The division and analysis underline the milestones and transition paths in Greek politics towards new communicative and political ethics. The rationale of this research is commensurate with many comparative studies which emphasise the importance of the context in the adaptation of the 'Americanized' political communication model. The chapter also reflects on how the specific socio-political context of the country has interfered, defined and shaped the adaptation of 'imported' methods in political communication and how these methods have resulted in significant changes and shifts in Greek media democracy and Greek politics in general.

In **Chapter 16**, Panos Koliastasis examines the communication strategies of three Greek governments (PASOK, New Democracy, SYRIZA) in the period 2009–2019. From a relational political brand perspective, newly elected governments are primarily concerned with maintaining the trust of the electoral coalition that brought them in office in order to secure their re-election. Hence, as Needham (2005) has suggested, governing parties tend to employ a political communication strategy aimed at promoting an effective brand consisted of six components: simplicity, uniqueness, reassurance, aspiration, values and credibility. In this context, this study examines the communication strategies of three Greek governments against these six branding criteria. Following a qualitative methodological approach, the study analyses the key speeches of the respective prime ministers along with polling evidence and secondary data. It argues that all these three governments failed to be reelected once they implemented the memoranda, not only because of the unpopular nature of the austerity measures but also because of their failure to fully retain their political brands in office since they hardly succeed to deliver on their promises, though it is unclear whether they self-consciously employed such a branding strategy.

Gerasimos Karoulas investigates publicity as an electoral factor for political personnel though an examination of the main profiles and paths of the politicians having practised media-related professions, during the last 30 years in Greece (**Chapter 17**). The ‘symbiotic’ relationship between media and politics has multiple effects on the way political elites act and behave. However, only limited attention has been given on the impact of contemporary media in the emerging, recruitment and composition of the political elites. Drawing heavily on the various approaches of social, political and media capital, and taking advantage of two related databases offering quantitative data, Karoulas demonstrates that media have a considerable impact in political selection procedure, given the fact that elected candidates with a media background have increased considerably during the last years, their candidacies are mainly addressed to wide electorates, while media constitutes an important path for the elections in political elites’ positions.

Further, in **Chapter 18**, Theofanis Exadaktylos assesses how embedded political polarisation has become in setting up the electoral campaigns for the 2019 General Election between the two main contenders, SYRIZA and New Democracy in the way they projected their political narrative in the public sphere. Political parties frequently engage in exclusionary narratives resulting in a game of blame-shifting. While this is understandably part of political life, claiming responsibility is decreasing and blame attribution is increasing in times of crisis as political actors seek to minimise political cost and rally supporters. Crises also create fertile ground for polarisation as affected citizens look for quick solutions and are driven to the extremes of the political spectrum. That effect has been demonstrated in Greece: political parties in the first years of the Greek financial crisis (2009–2012) engaged in an endless game of blame-shifting and exclusion, which was replicated within opinion pieces within mainstream press. This resulted in the polarisation of society with new political cleavages emerging, most notably on the pro/antiausterity divide. Within the context of this divide, populist rhetoric

assisted exclusion as the two sides tried to demarcate boundaries, identify allies and enemies and reinforce a ‘Them’ vs ‘Us’ dichotomy to consolidate their identities. Using substantive content analysis of framing, the chapter collected opinion pieces written from the day the election was announced (26 May) to the day after the result (8 July) in two newspapers: New Democracy – leaning Kathimerini – and SYRIZA – leaning Avgi. The chapter identified the blame frames of the two sides and assessed polarisation by coding for the tone of references using an exclusivity index, suggesting that both newspapers engaged in a race of blame, bringing the political debate to the forefront, and ensuring that polarisation was transferred into the public sphere, consolidating the ‘them’ versus ‘us’ divide.

Nikos Smyrniaios and Athina Karatzogianni examine the rise of SYRIZA during 2009 and 2015 and analyse the digital battlefield of that period using data analytics as well as interviews with key players (**Chapter 19**). SYRIZA managed to build international support up to the January 2015 election with very limited resources, and against mainstream coverage, by relying essentially on grassroots movements and social media. They show how approaching to power, SYRIZA’s political, but also communication strategy, became more institutionalised and relied less on grassroots campaigning. Methodologically, their research is based on the following research techniques: First, interviews with activists and members of the party as well as observations inside its social media team. Second, the study of online content and data from 2006 to 2015. Overall, the chapter demonstrates that SYRIZA’s campaign on the Internet relied mainly on alternative media activists, who acquired a specific *savoir faire* and developed international networks, during the intense antiausterity social movement, which took place in Greece between 2010 and 2013. The campaign was also supported by young experts from the private sector that contributed on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, SYRIZA’s success was mainly due to the European political context and the opportunities it offered to the radical Left, rather than the party’s communication strategy, which in any case suffered both from a lack of means, as well as from a somewhat chaotic (non)organisation.

To continue, in **Chapter 20**, Amalia Triantafillidou, Prodromos Yannas and Anastasia Kani shed light on the interrelationships that exist between politicians’ Twitter agendas, news websites agendas and public agendas at the first level, during the 2019 Greek parliamentary elections, for the two front-runners of the elections Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Alexis Tsipras. Three studies were conducted to assess the issue agendas of candidates’ tweets, news websites coverage and the issue importance of the public for an 18-day period prior to the elections. At the issue level, although Twitter and media agendas align more, they are distinct from public agenda. Overall, Twitter proved to be an ineffective tool for influencing the news websites and public agendas during the 2019 Greek Parliamentary elections with online media agendas being slightly more powerful. Moreover, the public agenda did play a role in shaping Twitter as well as media content but in a counterbalancing manner. In addition, this study confirmed that agenda building and setting dynamics at both levels vary based on the issue and candidate being analysed.