

6.9 Digression: Alternate views

In the present paper, the case "Liechtenstein and the German tax affair" was analyzed using the model of social framing of issues developed by Eichhorn as part of the agenda-setting approach, in order to identify the influence processes, structures and actors underlying the case from a communications perspective. The model has proven to be well suited, since it offers a comprehensive approach for answering the questions relating to actors, framing of issues, and influence processes.

The model does not fully answer one of the questions raised, however: How can the timing of the eruption of the tax affair be explained? As mentioned in the introduction, the LGT data had been available to the German authorities for one and a half years already.

With the help of the Eichhorn model, we have identified the actors in the present case, filtered out the individual issues and the issue structures, and shown the influence process. We have not gleaned any information concerning the question of timing, i.e. the point in time when the Zumwinkel arrest was staged. The explanation according to Eichhorn would be that the "straw broke the camel's back", i.e. that interest-policy upheavals among the political actors in Germany led to the "eruption" of latent, unresolved differences of opinion and the associated emotions, such as "tax competition vs. tax harmonization" (see also Chapter 6.6.1) or "German citizens investing money in Liechtenstein that is not declared to the German tax authorities". In the opinion of the author, this explanation does not cover everything, however.

The involved actors act in various arenas. Arenas are places in which battle is waged and the actors have to pit their strength against each other or – in the figurative sense – try to assert their interests. Already due to the different roles they play in the social structure, actors with a society already act in different arenas. This is even more true of actors acting in the international environment. This results in a confusing and complex picture.

The connection between the different actors in the different arenas and the time of their actions may be explainable with the help of the *garbage-can model*. The garbage-can model describes the decision-making behavior of organizations and was first formulated by Michael Cohen, James March and Johan P. Olsen in 1972. In works in accordance with a simple yet complex principle: actors, problems, solutions, and possibilities are thrown into a garbage can. The "random" encounter of fitting elements initiates a process that ultimately results in a solution (see Eichhorn 2005, 151).

The application of this model would accommodate those political observers who believe that the events surrounding 14 February and afterwards were a pure coincidence. It was probably a coincidence that the prominent house search of Klaus Zumwinkel in the media took place on 14 February, Valentine's Day and the birthday of Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II, the Head of State of the Principality of Liechtenstein, and that precisely on that day the Futuro project – a vision for the Liechtenstein business location and financial center – was presented. But was it actually a coincidence that the beginning of the tax affair took place one week before the long-planned official visit by Prime Minister Otmar Hasler to Federal Chancellor Merkel and Federal Minister of Finance Peer Steinbrück? The last visit by a Liechtenstein Prime Minister to Berlin had been in 1992! For some observers, that is too much of a coincidence, and they assume that the timing was planned or at least an opportunity was seized – the existence of a