

## Panel 14: New Directions in the Study of Regulatory Administration: regulatory networks and regulatory autonomy

**Chaired by: Kutsal Yesilkagit (Utrecht University) and Sandra van Thiel (Erasmus University Rotterdam).**

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The politics of delegation to regulatory agencies and regulation after delegation are extensively studied topics within the field of regulation and regulatory administration. Past research has generated new insights in both the determinants of agency creation and the bureaucratic autonomy of regulatory authorities. The findings from these studies have given rise to a set of new further questions.

One such insight is that studies of regulatory administration have shown that the exact relationships between formal and real autonomy or independence are far from straightforward. Another insight is that the regulatory authorities do not operate in a vacuum; by contrast they operate within supra- and transnational, national, regional and sectoral networks in which other regulators, regulatees, stakeholders, the larger public and the media also have stakes in the outcomes of regulatory policies. In other words, although the 'relational' nature of autonomy is acknowledged, agency studies focus mainly on autonomy of public sector organizations towards government and regulatees, neglecting the effect of other government regulators, parliament, interest groups, mass media, bodies on other governmental levels on their autonomy.

Moreover, despite recent important developments it remains largely unclear how tasks, political salience, policy field and national politico-administrative culture and history affects the autonomy of regulatory bodies in different countries and sectors. In addition, the different ways in which regulatory bodies themselves can 'forge' more autonomy by developing strategies towards all these stakeholders need more systematic study.

Finally, the dynamic nature of autonomy is not fully researched: autonomy of regulatory actors can change over time, dependent on certain factors (administrative, political, and societal factors). Longitudinal or retrospective studies are therefore needed.

For this panel we invited conceptual and empirical, single country or sector or cross-sectoral studies of regulatory administration that address these issue and are aimed pushing forward the agenda of research on regulatory administration. More specifically, we looked for papers that address the nature of regulatory networks and how independent regulatory agencies function interact with these networks. We looked for papers that bring forward the study of autonomy and independence of regulatory agencies in the directions described above (actual versus formal autonomy; dynamic perspectives) and taking into account the multi-actor and multi-level features of current regulatory regimes.