

**Panel proposal NIG Annual Work Conference 2011
Rotterdam, 1-2 December 2011**

Panel on Regulatory Governance: agencies and beyond

Regulatory governance is more and more often seen as a solution to solve continuous problems with the implementation of national and EU policies, and to improve the compliance of businesses and other actors. Academic research in this field has increased, but we still lack knowledge of how regulation and in particular the institutions established to regulate – regulatory agencies – can help policymakers to achieve desired policy outcomes. Regulatory agencies are supposed to conduct their tasks in an autonomous way, independent from political and industry interference. This raises questions on, for example, the effect of other government regulators, parliament, interest groups, mass media, bodies on other governmental levels on the autonomy of regulatory agencies; how autonomy varies between sectors, countries and over time; and what strategies agencies themselves apply to forge more autonomy. Moreover, regulatory agencies are increasingly forming national, regional and supra- or transnational networks of regulators, in such areas as energy, telecom, securities as well as transport and the environment. These networks can bypass political authorities, such as national ministries because of their international orientation and expertise.

The increase in the number of regulatory agencies and networks raises the question how effective regulation is or can be. And what are the cumulative effects of these institutions, either intended or unintended? In relation to this we note a shift (at least in the Netherlands) in regulatory philosophy, from rule-based regulation to more risk-based or systemic regulation, with a prominent role for self-regulation by companies. In such sectors as the building sector, regulation is increasingly being privatized. This also raises questions of accountability; with the increase in the number of regulatory actors, it becomes more and more difficult to hold such actors to account for their behavior, particularly if they operate outside of the direct influence of democratically elected politicians. In this respect it is not only interesting to zoom in on novel horizontal forms of accountability but it is also interesting to look at the role of the courts, parliament and the media and their scrutiny of regulatory activities.

This panel invites papers that:

- Theorize one or more of the above (or related) trends and developments in regulatory governance.
- (Empirically) explore changes in approaches to regulatory governance over time.
- Investigate trends in one or more policy sectors or countries, longitudinally and/or retrospectively.
- Study one or more institutions/agencies that are involved in policy implementation or have a regulatory task.
- Analyze the shifting balance between the national, European and international level (so the multi-level features of current regulatory regimes), and/or,
- Examine the role of non-state actors such as businesses and consumers, but also the media

This panel will also be used as the kick off meeting for the NIG Research Colloquium on Regulatory Governance. Both the panel and the colloquium are linked to themes 2 and 3 of the NIG research programme.

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