

Panel 13: Agencification: Patterns, Results And New Questions

Organizers:

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In the past decades, western governments have widely delegated tasks to semi-autonomous agencies. For example, ZBOs and Agentschappen were established in the Netherlands, while the UK created Next Steps Agencies and NDPBs. Agencies are widespread in Flanders (IVAs and EVAs), France (Public Establishments), Nordic countries (agencies), and so on. In most countries, almost all types of tasks (executive, service delivery, advisory, regulation) have been put at arms' length. At the same time, there are many differences regarding the (legal) types of organizations and the pace or trajectory of reform. For example, the United Kingdom chose a marketization strategy and privatized several public tasks/organizations. On the other hand, the Netherlands preferred a modernization strategy and 'autonomization'.

All in all, agencification seems to have led to an increasingly fragmented public sector, characterized by a wide range of public sector organizations.

This panel aimed to address this trend by inviting papers based on descriptive, explanatory or evaluating studies of agencification.

1. Descriptive papers can for example deal with patterns and processes of agencification, both within and between countries, levels of government, sectors, tasks or types of organizations.
2. Explanatory papers are expected to offer and/or test explanations for the proliferation of agencification, either in general or for specific units of analysis (countries, tasks, legal types of organizations). Papers that aim to explain differences in organizational characteristics (e.g. autonomy, steering, use of management techniques) are also welcome.
3. Evaluating papers looking at the effect of agencification:
 - Has agencification fulfilled the expectations, such as improved agency performance and a reduction of political interference?
 - Has agencification led to new steering problems and if so, which ones? For instance, what are the effects of an increased fragmentation on the capabilities to steer agencies? Another example refers to the regulatory state: how can governments regulate incumbents and markets (e.g. financial markets), while maintaining the autonomy of regulatory authorities?
 - How do agencies cope with a fragmented (multi-actor and multi-level) environment?

Papers on these and related topics, with a national or international-comparative perspective, as well as a multi-level/EU focus, or focus on specific policy sectors are all welcome.

The theme of this panel is linked to the NIG research programme, in particular to the theme of public management.