P166 / AI Governance Systems and Regulatory Choices: Institutions, Politics and Policy Design

Topic : Policy Design, Formulation & Instruments

Chair : Laura Chaqués Bonafont (Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals)

Second Chair : David García-García (Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals)

Third Chair : Xavier Fernández-i-Marín (LMU Munich)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The governance of artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly important area of public policymaking, raising fundamental questions about how political authorities, regulatory institutions, private actors and other stakeholders organize and exercise authority over emerging technologies. Across countries and policy sectors, different governance systems are taking shape, reflecting variations in institutional arrangements, regulatory traditions, political interests and relationships between public and private actors. Understanding why these systems differ, how they evolve and how they influence regulatory choices constitutes an important challenge for public policy research.

This panel aims to explain the emergence, configuration, and evolution of AI governance systems and examine how their institutional and political characteristics shape the development of AI regulation. The panel pursues three interconnected objectives.

First, it seeks to identify the political, institutional and sectoral factors that explain variation in AI governance systems. It pays particular attention to institutional legacies, regulatory traditions, political coalitions, economic interests, and the relationships between public authorities and private actors.

Second, it aims to characterize and compare the institutional configurations of AI governance, examining how authority and responsibilities are distributed among actors, how governance arrangements are structured across levels of government, and how established sectoral institutions adapt to the challenges posed by AI.

Third, it investigates how these governance configurations influence regulatory policymaking, including the definition of regulatory priorities, the selection of policy instruments, the scope of regulation and the distribution of regulatory authority.

The panel adopts a comparative perspective, welcoming research on AI governance across different policy sectors and institutional contexts. Contributions may examine governance arrangements within particular sectors or compare their development across sectors, jurisdictions and periods. Particular interest is given to explaining how sectoral characteristics, established institutional arrangements and regulatory traditions shape AI governance systems and their influence on regulatory choices. Comparative and longitudinal studies are encouraged alongside theoretically informed single-case studies.

By bringing together research on comparative governance, institutional analysis, regulatory politics and policy design, the panel seeks to advance the conceptualization and systematic comparison of AI governance systems. Its broader contribution is to strengthen explanations of how governance arrangements emerge and develop, and how their characteristics condition regulatory choices across different policy contexts. In doing so, the panel aims to connect the study of AI governance to wider theoretical debates in public policy research.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) presents governments with fundamental challenges concerning the organization of governance and the development of regulatory frameworks. Across jurisdictions and policy sectors, different AI governance systems are emerging, characterized by diverse institutional arrangements, distributions of authority, regulatory traditions and relationships between public and private actors. Understanding the political and institutional factors explaining these differences, and their implications for regulatory policymaking, constitutes an important research agenda for public policy scholarship.

This panel invites theoretical and empirical contributions examining the emergence, configuration, and evolution of AI governance systems and how these systems shape regulatory choices. It seeks to move beyond the analysis of individual regulatory initiatives to investigate the broader institutional and political arrangements within which AI regulation is formulated and developed.

We particularly welcome contributions addressing three interconnected themes:

1. Emergence and evolution of AI governance systems. What political, institutional and economic factors explain the development of different AI governance arrangements? How do existing regulatory traditions, institutional legacies, political coalitions and public–private relationships shape their emergence and transformation? What explains variation across countries, policy sectors and periods?

2. Institutional configurations and governance arrangements. How is authority over AI distributed among public institutions, regulatory agencies, private firms, professional organizations and other stakeholders? What explains differences in centralization, fragmentation, coordination, and reliance on public or private governance? How do sectoral institutions and multilevel governance arrangements influence the organization of AI governance systems?

3. Governance systems and regulatory choices. How do different governance configurations influence regulatory agendas, priorities, and policy formulation? How do institutional arrangements and relationships among actors shape the selection of regulatory instruments, the scope and content of regulation, and the allocation of regulatory responsibilities? Under what conditions do governance systems favour particular regulatory approaches, including binding rules, voluntary standards, self-regulation and co-regulation?

The panel adopts a comparative perspective, welcoming research on AI governance across different policy sectors and institutional contexts. Contributions may examine governance arrangements within particular sectors or compare their development across sectors, jurisdictions and periods. Particular interest is given to explaining how sectoral characteristics, established institutional arrangements and regulatory traditions shape AI governance systems and their influence on regulatory choices.

Contributions may draw on comparative public policy, institutionalism, regulatory governance, policy design, political economy and related theoretical perspectives. Comparative and longitudinal studies are encouraged alongside theoretically informed single-case studies and mixed-methods research. Papers developing conceptual frameworks or comparative typologies of AI governance systems are also welcome.

The panel aims to bring together research that explains why AI governance systems differ, how they are institutionally organized, and how these differences shape regulatory policymaking. Its broader ambition is to advance comparative and theoretically grounded explanations of AI governance and contribute to wider debates on institutions, governance and policy design.