W03 / The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

Topic : Public Administration & Governance

Chair : Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

Second Chair : Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

This workshop seeks to address a number of questions related to patterns of accountability and responsiveness of independent agencies in contemporary democracies. We will explore the conditions under which we observe stronger accountability of independent agencies, including the individual and contextual determinants of the type and quality of scrutiny that parliamentarians perform. For instance, we may hypothesise that features such as the salience and 'publicness' of the agency matter, but also the background of the account holder (e.g., relevant expertise and experience), and (reputational) pressure from the agency's environment. Furthermore, in a period of growing populism and politicization of governance by independent agencies, the workshop will also explore whether and how vote-seeking representatives adapt their account-holding practices in order to attract media attention and, possibly, electoral rewards.

Then, moving to responsiveness, the workshop also seeks to shed light on the extent to which, and conditions under which, independent agencies' communicative and policy actions target or respond to wider public priorities or sensitivities, and in what ways they do that. Again, we expect features such as salience and reputational pressure to matter, with greater threats also coming from populist governments. Additionally, we aim to investigate how independent agencies combine responsiveness to specific stakeholders with their mandate-related priorities and activities.

The workshop is also open to contributions that broaden the topic of bureaucratic responsiveness or politicization of legislative oversight of independent technocratic bodies beyond the focus described above. For instance, we would welcome papers that explore the relationship between independent agencies and democratic systems – including in terms of what we should and can expect from accountability and responsiveness – from a political theoretical perspective.

By bridging insights from complementary yet so-far not so connected fields of agency accountability and policy and communicative responsiveness, the workshop will contribute to the scholarly debate about the position of governance by independent agencies in democratic systems, including reflections on the democratic embeddedness of the organizations, and how they navigate the current contestation and representational demands in contemporary democratic systems.

ABSTRACT

This workshop examines the democratic embeddedness of independent agencies, focusing on how they remain accountable and responsive despite institutional insulation from electoral politics. While such bodies - like regulators and central banks - are designed to ensure credibility and long-term policy stability, they face growing scrutiny over their legitimacy and responsiveness in an era of politicization and populism. The workshop explores when and why accountability is stronger, how parliamentary oversight varies across contexts, and how vote-seeking representatives use accountability forums for political purposes. It also investigates how agencies respond to public expectations through communication, transparency, and reputational management. By bringing together research on accountability, responsiveness, and bureaucratic legitimacy, the workshop seeks to advance understanding of how independent agencies navigate contemporary demands for representation and trust within democratic systems.

W03 / The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

Chair : Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

Second Chair : Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

Session 1Incentives, behaviour & outcomes

Monday, July 6th 10:15 to 12:15 (5136A)

Are Lame-Duck Central Bankers More Active?

Etienne Farvaque (Université de Lille)

Davide Romelli (University of Dublin, Trinity College)

Assessing the parliamentary accountability of independent central banks

Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

Independent Regulators and Policy Implementation: Pathways to Compliance with International Banking Rules

Paolo Stohlman (Università di Bologna)

Lorenzo Eaco (Università di Bologna)

W03 / The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

Chair : Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

Second Chair : Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

Session 3Political independence, control & accountability (1)

Tuesday, July 7th 09:00 to 12:15 (5136A)

Role of Accountability Regime in Exploring the Dynamics of Accountability and Performance of Independent Regulatory Authority in a Global South Context

Mahnoor Farooq (Quaid-i-Azam University)

Amending independence – when do legislators change EU agencies' formal independence?

Eva Ruffing (Universität Osnabrück)

Why central bank reforms matter – Lessons from the past 50 years

Etienne Farvaque (Université de Lille)

W03 / The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

Chair : Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

Second Chair : Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

Session 4Political independence, control & accountability (2)

Tuesday, July 7th 14:00 to 17:15 (5136A)

'Independence' in question: The construction of a relative autonomy of nuclear organizations vis-à-vis political authorities in France

Valerie Arnhold (emlyon)

Populist pressures and Central Bank Independence: Evidence from Poland

Paulina Lenik (Jagiellonian University Cracow)

W03 / The democratic embeddedness of independent agencies: Analysing responsiveness and accountability

Chair : Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

Second Chair : Christel Koop (King's College London, University of London)

Session 5Independent agencies and the wider society

Wednesday, July 8th 09:00 to 12:15 (5136A)

(Virtual) Preferences for representation and responsiveness in international bureaucracies: a survey experiment

Reinout Van der Veer (Radboud University of Nijmegen)

Do societal priorities matter for the agendas of independent central banks?

Michele Scotto di Vettimo (King's College London)

(Virtual) Emotionalizing Reputational Audiences: An Affective Dynamic Framework for Bureaucratic Reputation in the Digital Era

Moshe Maor (Reichman University)