



Aston Business School



The Potential of the Network Approach for Analysing Regulations and Regulatory Processes: Empirical Examples from the Egyptian Telecommunication Sector

Ahmed Badran
Research Fellow
Aston Centre for Critical Infrastructure and Services (ACCIS)
a.badran@aston.ac.uk

Abstract

The widespread utilisation of the network approach in different scientific and social science disciplines raises a fundamental question about its validity for studying and analysing specific type of policies such as regulation. In other words, the question that this paper attempts to answer is that, can networks be treated as more than a metaphor? If so, what aspects of regulations and regulatory processes does network analysis illuminate? The answer presented in this paper is yes, the network approach can be a valuable analytical tool for analysing regulations and regulatory processes and it can add some new 'stones to the wall' of regulatory studies. From this perspective, the paper asserts that with few exceptions, the potential of policy networks for studying and analysing regulation policies and regulatory processes have received a little attention. Regulation has been the subject of many scholarly researches, articles, and books. Using different approaches and theoretical frameworks, such studies covered different social, legal, economic, political, and administrative aspects of the topic. These studies are important but not sufficient either to capture the whole picture about the dynamic nature of regulatory processes or to visualise interactions and relationships between actors involved in different regulatory arenas. Based on the analysis of an empirical data set constructed from interviews with decision-makers, regulated companies and civil society organizations using Social Network Analysis (SNA) techniques, this paper attempts to highlight the structural and relational analytical powers of the network approach. It concludes that combining quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the network approach can lead to a more serious treatment of networks than just a metaphor that captures relationships between state and non-state actors.