

Making European scrutiny work. Interparliamentary networks as epistemic communities

Most research on epistemic communities emphasizes decision-making as a result of tightly-networked groups of administrators, often working closely together with highly specialized experts from industry or science. The focus is clearly on regulatory policy-making; the European Union clearly stands out as a prime example of such a “regulatory state” (Majone) where complex regulatory issues are dealt with in transnational working groups of the Commission and the Council.

In this (proposed) paper I wish to highlight the role of a different kind of epistemic community which plays an increasingly important role in the EU but it is not concerned with regulatory issues in the strict sense: Networks established between parliaments and, perhaps more importantly, between parliamentary administrations. Ironically, the establishment of this kind of epistemic community bringing together national parliaments can be regarded as a response to the often secretive and executive-led decision-making in the EU’s realm.

My research considers how the constitutional changes brought by the Lisbon Treaty have given more power to national parliaments to control executive decision-making at the EU level. Importantly, national parliaments can use these powers only if they act collectively. I will show how this necessity has led to growing formal and informal cooperation among parliaments which focuses on the one hand on institutional harmonization of scrutiny mechanisms. On the other hand, parliaments increasingly coordinate to their activities at the policy-specific level as well, in order to find “majorities” which would allow them drawing “yellow” or “orange” cards in order to hold on EU legislative drafts. The paper will focus mainly on institutionalization and dynamics within this legislative network and is based mainly on qualitative interview carried out during the last two years.

Dr. Aron Buzogany, FU Berlin, buzogany@aya.yale.edu