AMSTERDAM CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Workshop

Combining rules and practices in EU legal and social scientific research

Organized by the Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance

Aim

Many of us combine the study of rules and practices in our research, in an attempt to grapple with, and do justice to the complexity of European integration. In current EU research, whether carried out by legal scholars, political scientists or public administration scholars, it is deemed good practice to make this distinction. Examples are manifold: researchers distinguish between *de jure* and *de facto*, between law and implementation, or between norms and behaviours. This is not to claim that the distinction is similarly employed and understood by researchers, or even that it should. Often, the distinction is developed for the specific purposes of a study: it could be of a conceptual nature, indicate an empirical approach to a formal problem, relate to different types of data, or be a rationale for distinctive forms of (scientific) analysis. Nevertheless, the distinction, which is here referred to as 'rules versus practices', can be observed to be a recurrent dividing line. What does it mean? How do we employ it? This workshop seeks to tease out some of the assumptions that we have when we use the 'rules v practices' distinction in our own research. Its aim is not to put forward best practices, but rather to make our approach more explicit and to learn from each other through comparison and brainstorming.

Attendance to the workshop is by invitation only.

Date & Venue

Friday 8 March 2013, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Oudemanhuispoort

Programme

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival and coffee
09:30 – 09:35 Word of welcome (*Deirdre Curtin, Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance*)

09:35 – 10:45 **Session 1: Introducing rules v practices: what do we mean?**
Introduction: Gijs Jan Brandsma, Utrecht School of Governance

In this session, we will discuss the salience of the 'rules v practices' distinction in political science research on the EU. What is meant by it, and why might it be a better approach to the study of the EU than more traditional methodological approaches? What are the main obstacles? How is such work received in different academic disciplines?

10:45 – 11:00 *Coffee break*

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 2: Rules v practices in theory: monodisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity?**
Introduction: Bettina Leufgen, Utrecht School of Governance

In this session, we will discuss the theoretical implications of combining rules and practices in a single study. What are their uses for descriptive or explanatory studies? How could one theorise the interaction between rules and practices? And if the combination of rules and practices requires theories from various disciplines (this is an open question!), what happens when these theories interact?

12:30 – 13:15 *Lunch*

13:15 – 14:45 **Session 3: Rules v practices: data and data analysis**
Introduction: Madalina Busuioc, London School of Economics

Rules and practices presuppose different types of data, and a distinct understanding of these data. What do we mean by 'data', how are the two types distinct, and where do you go looking for suitable data? Moreover, when researchers say that they analyse rules and practices data and their interaction, what do they mean?

14:45 – 15:00 *Coffee break*

15:00 – 16:30 **Concluding session: rules and practices, holistic vision or methodological cover-up?**
Introduction: Maarten Hillebrandt, Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance

An innovative, more nuanced, or multidisciplinary approach can be good and useful, but only if it adds more than it costs. Also, 'studying rules and practices' should not become a label to add because it 'sells'. What rules of thumb can we think of to get the most out of our 'rules v practices' approaches without losing the overview?

After 16:30 *Drinks*