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Conference review of the Unpacking the Complexity of Regulatory Governance in a Globalising World Conference 2019

Unpacking the Complexity of Regulatory Governance in a Globalising World Conference was organised by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) with support from the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Standing Group on Regulatory Governance in Hong Kong, between July 4 and 6 2019. About 200 researchers and PhD students from around 40 countries attended the conference. Although the event had a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific Region and the so-called Global South, the attendance – following the regional distribution of workshops involved in research on the subject – was far from limited to this region. There were significant numbers of European and American researchers too. The event was considered an introduction to a conference series on regulatory regimes in Asia as an initial step to globalising research on regulatory governance.

The conference venue contained more than 40 panels organised in 8 panel sections, which offered a great opportunity to unpack the wide range of regulatory governance research topics. As a result, although the conference dealt with social and political scientist's topics, due to the diverse nature of the areas to be regulated and the complexity of regulatory tasks, the sections addressed a number of economic and legal issues as well. In regard to this, panels were held on such topics as resilience and environmental governance, nanotechnology, CSR regulation and varieties of regulatory capitalism.

The conference's keynote speaker was Professor Colin Scott (University College Dublin, Ireland). He discussed the growing role and number of university rankings in higher education and, in this context, models of university governance aimed at improving competitiveness. Since there could be large differences among the results of the rankings, it is a difficult task to improve competitiveness of a specific university. The situation is very similar to the Hungarian high school rankings, where the order of the top 50 high schools varies highly due to different evaluation criteria and weights. According to the lecture, universities have traditionally followed a model based on collegial collaboration, which was replaced by a bureaucratic and formal model. Although it is a very formal and standardized approach suitable for mass higher education, the model is reactive and uncompetitive in the globalized world. Higher education rankings are based on various key performance indicators (such as Q1 publications, Nobel prizes, internationally known scholars, etc.), which require more efficient and competitive

governance models. That demand has led to the adaptation of corporate models, whose strategic and operational decision making is based on performance indicators. Although this enterprise model is proactive, globalization, Scott says, requires a further paradigm shift. In the future, this will mean implementing the entrepreneurial model, which will mean a creative, project-based, decentralized governance model.

Since Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, its governance structure (the so-called one state, two system principle) – apart from the recent unrest – may be of interest as well. The model was demonstrated at a roundtable discussion in which heads of three local think tanks and the head of the government's decision-making and coordinating departments talked about how to set up and follow up government measures. The local character is due to the fact that, under the influence of the People's Republic of China, think tanks carry out preparatory studies both for the government and independently. As a result, think tanks could be considered as a proxy of civil society but according to a critical commentator from the audience their work is highly influenced by the pro-Chinese government.

The final (official) agenda of the conference was also a round-table discussion, the Editors Forum. The editors of three leading journals (Regulation & Governance; Public Administration; Law & Policy; Public Policy and Administration) discussed the mission of their journals, the topics of the papers they received, and the principles and process of editorial work. Following the general introduction, the editors answered questions from the audience. At this time, it was pointed out that editors often decide on a desk reject based on the abstract, usually within 2-3 business days. In the revision process, the aim is to involve reviewers with relevant knowledge of the topic and region. The editors emphasized that, when accepting manuscripts, studies from different regions will be judged on the same principles but they expect research that reflects existing research findings, directions, original research and results that can be applied internationally.

Acknowledgement