

Methodological appendix

A. UK national newspaper coverage of regulatory agencies

To collect data on the coverage of regulatory agencies in UK newspapers, we used Nexis UK. We included the following national newspapers in our search: (1) the Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday/Mail Online, (2) the Daily Star/Daily Star Sunday, (3) The Express/Express Online, (4) the i/the Independent, (5) the Mirror/Sunday Mirror/mirror.co.uk, (6) Morning Star, (7) the Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph/telegraph.co.uk, (8) the Business, (9) the Guardian/the Observer, (10) the People, and (11) the Times/Sunday Times. Some sectors had multiple regulators in particular periods of time; for instance, before April 2014, there were two competition authorities: the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and the Competition Commission. For these periods, we added up the references to the different regulators.

B. Interview data

We gathered our interview data in London in the period from May to early July 2019. The data collection was registered at King's College London's Research Ethics Office (Research Ethics Minimal Risk Registration Form MRA-18/19-10695) and Research Governance Office (Research Data Protection Registration Form DPRF-18/19-9065). The main aim of the interviews was to improve our understanding of regulatory trends in the past twenty years and, in particular, the politicisation of regulation and its implications for economic regulators in the United Kingdom. Therefore, we contacted, and conducted semi-structured interviews with, individuals who could offer a long-term perspective by currently and/or formerly holding senior positions in one or more of the regulatory agencies that are of interest to our study; namely those in the fields of competition policy, energy, communications, railways and water regulation, and financial market supervision. The senior officials whom we interviewed hold or held positions such as chief executive, chief economist and senior or executive director.

The aim was to select individuals with long-term and cross-sectoral experiences. Though we contacted individuals for their expertise and experience in regulatory agencies, many of our interviewees also had experience working in ministerial departments. Whilst their background and our interview questions sought to reduce potential 'recency bias' (in that recent changes are always seen as most significant), we cannot fully exclude such bias. However, by using documents to complement and illustrate the interview data, we seek to mitigate this risk.

Ten of the twelve interviews (with thirteen interviewees) were recorded for our own use and subsequently transcribed. The remaining two interviews took place in public establishments;

the background noise prevented us from recording the interviews, but we took extensive notes during the interview. The interviews lasted, on average, about an hour. Table A provides further details, taking into consideration our commitment to anonymity. Where individuals have held numerous positions across sectors, we refer to ‘utility regulation’ as otherwise their anonymity might be compromised.

Table A: Interviews and interviewees

No	Time and date	Interviewee(s) (type)
1	14 May, 11am	Senior official with experience in competition policy and utility regulation
2	20 May, 11am	Senior official with experience in utility regulation
3	21 May, 1pm	Two senior officials with experience in utility regulation
4	21 May, 4pm	Senior official with experience in competition policy
5	28 May, 1pm	Senior official with experience in financial market regulation, competition policy and utility regulation
6	30 May, 9:30am	Senior official with experience in financial market regulation, utility regulation and competition policy
7	5 June, 3:30pm	Senior official with experience in utility regulation and competition policy
8	7 June, 10am	Senior official with experience in rail regulation
9	11 June, 5:30pm	Senior official with experience in competition policy
10	17 June, 11:30am	Senior official with experience in utility regulation
11	23 July, 2:45pm	Senior official with experience in utility and financial market regulation
12	12 August, 10am	Senior official with experience in financial market regulation

Whilst our interviews were tailored to maximise the contribution of the interview to our research, our interview guide included the following general questions:

- [After showing the graphs with the development of media attention] Is this an overall trend you recognise? Could you reflect on the changes in media attention over time? Why have we seen these changes?
- How has [relevant organisation] responded to the changes in media attention?
- Would you say that political attention has, in general, (also) increased over time? What kind of issues generate departmental/ministerial interest? And could you reflect on the changes

over time? How have they affected the organisation? Has the leadership selected changed over time?

- Has the attention that Parliament attributes to [relevant organisation] changed over time? Does attention primarily come from the relevant select committee? Has the relationship with the select committee changed over time?
- How has [relevant organisation] responded to the changes in political attention?
- Could you tell us about the role that citizens play for the organisation? Has the relationship changed over time? Could you reflect on the view of ‘the consumer’ in regulation? Has this changed over time? With what implications for the organisation?
- Has the way in which [the organisation] communicates and engages with citizens changed over time? If so, how?
- Which categories of citizens are (particularly) important for the organisation? Has this changed over time? If so, how has this affected the organisation – in terms of decision-making processes and outward-oriented activities?
- Could you tell us more about the relationship between [the organisation] and the regulated industry? Have there been changes in that relationship? If so, why? How has this affected the organisation?
- How would you characterise the overall changes in the environment in which the organisation operates?
- How would you characterise the changes in the organisation? Has anything changed in terms of the overall objectives that the organisation pursues? How has the change in political environment affected the regulatory strategy and tool selection?
- Would you, overall, say that the organisation is less insulated than it was in the past? Is it more strongly embedded in politics and/or society? Has the organisation become more political?