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Performance metrics, how politicians use them and the potential for institutional reform as a behavioural guide.

Abstract for paper

Elected representatives whether in executive or parliamentary roles have a complex relationship with evidence in the form of performance metrics. While it is common to find elected politicians using metrics for straightforward purposes of judging the progress of policies and associated service records, indifference and opportunism also feature in the empirical records academics have established of actual usage. The rationality that dominates parliamentary institutions will it seems only sometimes coincide with a metrics derived framing of political issues.

The structure of the paper is as follows:

1. What we know about elected representatives and performance metrics. A detailed review of the literature.
2. A discussion of politician's behavioural tendencies in relation to performance metrics and the institutional rules which matter in one specific parliamentary context. (Scotland). This will be used to stimulate debate as to whether conclusions drawn on this particular parliament are generalisable across Europe. The participants at TED should provide an excellent collective to discuss this.
3. Consideration of what a healthy political dialogue means and the place of metrics alongside other types of evidence. For example elected representatives will often by preference use 'folk evidence', or anecdotal evidence when alternatively performance metrics could be employed. Is this a legitimate cause for concern in relation to the potential realization of democratic ideals or an attribute of European political cultures?
4. A discussion of the concept of policy problems their 'natural histories' and a consideration of the capacity to capture realities through performance metrics.
5. The nature of institutional rules will be examined and possibilities for reform identified. The paper concludes by exploring the proposition that if behaviour is rule referenced, then new rules can cause different behaviours. The nature of relevant rules is examined.

Elected representatives and performance metrics what does the literature tell us?