

CALL FOR PAPERS

Biennial Meeting of the French Political Science Association

Montpellier, France, 10-12 July 2017

Thematic Panel 38

Qualifying and Quantifying Parliamentary Activity: Data, Methods and Practices

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This panel accepts papers **in English or in French**.

Discussions will be held in the language of the paper.

Please send one-page proposals **before October 15, 2016** to both organizers:

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For more information about the panel, see <http://f.briatte.org/st38/index.en.html>

Parliamentary activity is far from being a neglected topic in political science: on the contrary, enough research exists to allow for the confrontation of concurrent hypotheses on the nature, the functioning and the logics of what parliamentarians do. However, our review of that research reveals that it falls short of fully taking into account the qualification and quantification of newer legislative data sources, made available to researchers through digital technology and its implementation by parliamentary services.

In light of that review, this thematic panel offers to establish a general review of the ways in which political science research conceptualises both the qualification and quantification of parliamentary activity, by asking the following questions:

1. **What data on parliamentary activity are currently available?** How are these data accessible, and how can they be collected, aggregated and archived, both in terms of the tools available for researchers to perform that task, and from the perspective of making empirical research replicable?
2. **What methods are available to analyse these data?** Specifically, in what circumstances is it interesting to go beyond conventional measures of "legislative productivity," such as presence rates or quantities of submitted legislative documents, and with what consequences for modelling?

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3. **From a theoretical perspective, when we talk about the parliamentary space, what space are we talking about?** When we seek to qualify the “singular territory” of parliamentary activity, should one mention it rather as a “field”, as a “strategic action field”, or even as an “ecology”, and with what consequences for hypothesis formulation?
4. **From a methodological standpoint, at what level of analysis should parliamentary activity be aggregated?** When is it more relevant, for instance, to measure this activity at the level of the individual parliamentarian, who nonetheless usually features several people working as a team, rather than at other conceivable levels, such as parliamentary committees, groups, political parties, or even parliamentary chambers?
5. **What comparative perspectives do parliamentary activities open up?** How is it influenced, for instance, by electoral formulas, and what factors should we take into account when studying infra-national assemblies, such as state parliaments, or supranational assemblies, such as the European Parliament?
6. **How is parliamentary activity received in society?** What uses do social agents make of this activity, with what motives, and with what consequences, especially with regards to the strengthening of social constraints expressed as performance imperatives in polities that are increasingly marked by the audit logic?

In order to discuss these questions, we would like to encourage authors to submit papers based on empirical research, with an additional preference for comparative studies and for papers discussing methodological and practical issues as precisely as possible, in order to allow for an in-depth discussion of the research methods covered by all papers, and to allow for a collective critical review of these methods.

In addition to the papers themselves, the organizers encourage the authors to also provide them with any supplementary material allowing for a better understanding of the research protocol that they used (and especially datasets or, if relevant, replication code).