INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Wednesday, May 28th, 2014

**Sciences Po
Paris**

Open Legislative Data in Paris II
Time Has Come for Law Tracking

Organized by The Law Factory (Regards Citoyens and Sciences Po)

Open Legislative Data is a term mixing Open Data (the idea that public data should be made freely available to anyone for re-use and redistribution) & Legislative Studies (the academic study of parliaments and legislators).

The Law Factory is a French group composed of hacktivists (Regards Citoyens) and academics (Centre d'études européennes & Médialab Sciences Po). In July 2012, we organized a first conference in Paris about Parliamentary informatics.

Following the same tradition we will organize in May 2014, a second conference mainly focused on law tracking. The aim is to:

- Discuss, present and compare the latest developments regarding **law tracking, i.e. the visualization and analysis of the legislative procedure through computer analysis**.
- Reassemble two groups that rarely communicate: the academic world of legislative studies and individuals and organizations from across the open data and parliamentary informatics spectrum.

Tell me more

Two years ago, we organized in Paris an international conference, which gathered more than 100 participants from academics and practitioners to activists and technical experts. More about this conference can be found on our website:
http://www.lafabriquedelaloi.fr/conference/follow-up/

The next conference *Open Legislative Data In Paris II* will focus on **process tracking of legislation**. The many changes which affect bills during the parliamentary legislative procedure is still, to a large extent, a black box. We know that things happen in parliaments, that bills are amended and in some cases fully altered, but we still don't know exactly to which extent and why.

Three reasons may explain why the black box is still there. Firstly, the legislative process is complex. Thousands of amendments, several stages of readings (committee & floor) and, in many cases, the shuttle between 2 chambers of the parliament: everything seems to be done to get you lost. Secondly, the data produced throughout the legislative process is hardly accessible: some information is easy to find (like plenary amendments), some is only partially there (like committee debates) and some is just hidden (like lobbies inputs). Finally, process tracking of legislation has not really been, so far, the focus of people interested in parliament's business. Legislative studies scholars have been more interested in studying votes over legislation than actual contents of legislation. Hacktivists have been first and foremost known for monitoring MPs individual activities - such individual focus being not well fitted for understanding law-making, a collective process if there is one.

Few has been done with new technologies to understand how parliaments (re)write bills. There are good reasons to believe that time has come to do so: programmers have now the capacity to deal with gigantic corpora of data, parliaments have been more and more pushed to open their data, parliamentary monitoring websites have prepared citizens to understand and analyze legislative "serious" activities, and, last but not least, assessing the actual role of parliaments in law production is a prerequisite for understanding the quality of any democracy. We know that in modern democracies, law is not fully written in parliament and that the executive branch benefits from privileged tools for initiating (in Europe) or vetoing (in America) legislation. Yet, there is lack of systematic knowledge about what remains to parliaments, in which cases and in which policy fields.

Yes, the time has come to open the black box of parliaments' legislative activities.

What kind of topics will be covered?

We welcome proposals on **any aspects of law tracking in parliaments** linked to the use of computer science, be it in order to present existing projects, to explore new tools, to discuss their effects, to analyze legislatures through open parliamentary data…

Special attention will be given to the following areas:

- *The technical challenges of tracking bills in parliaments.* How do we deal with missing data? Should committees and floor amendments be treated the same? How do we connect the versions of the bills with the mountains of amendments? What should be done with the so numerous failed amendments?

- *The esthetical challenges of tracking bills in parliaments.* Which kind of visualization is optimal for making sense of a process as manifold as law making? Where should the focus be placed? How can digital design help?

- *The ethical challenges of tracking bills in parliaments.* Does the treatment of big corpora of legislative data really tell us something about the quality of a given democracy? Is it possible, for instance, to specify patterns of lobbying through law tracking?

All the presentations will be held in English

How do I get involved?

We welcome different kind of presentations from individual or groups, from academics or hacktivists… or both!

You can participate in two ways:
- Lightning presentations (5 minutes)
- Talks (10-15 minutes)

You'll find an on-line application form here: http://www.lafabriquedelaloi.fr/submit-a-proposal/

Application must be sent before **March 15th 2014**!

We've also got a dedicated mailing list for discussions around the conference which you can write to: TheLawFactory@ml.regardscitoyens.org. If you'd like to join the discussion, sign up by sending an empty e-mail to TheLawFactory-subscribe@ml.regardscitoyens.org.

Can I ask for a grant?

Yes! The Ile-de-France Region is the main sponsor for the conference. We offer limited funding for international participants in order to cover part of their travel and accommodation fees.

Application must be sent before March 15th 2014. Answers will be provided by April 30th 2014.

Can I sponsor the event?

Yes please! We are still actively seeking sponsorship for lunches, coffee, travel and accommodation for international participants and so on. If you think you might be interested, please contact Angela Tacea at picri@regardscitoyens.org to find out more about the sponsorship opportunities available.

Where do I find more?

http://www.lafabriquedelaloi.fr/

http://www.regardscitoyens.org/

http://www.medialab.sciences-po.fr/

http://www.cee.sciences-po.fr/

http://www.iledefrance.fr/