

Workshop organised by

PADEMIA / Centre d'études européennes / LIEEP

on

Strengthening Parliaments through Institutional Engineering

Paris, 3 – 4 December 2015

Call for Papers

Institutional Engineering refers to various changes in the organizational rules established with a precise aim. In the case of parliaments and parliamentary democracy, institutional engineering therefore accounts for the efforts made in order to strengthen parliaments. In most cases, the change of rules takes place at a constitutional level through amendments to the Constitution but it can also be realized at a lower stage such as ordinary laws or standing orders.

The workshop originates from the observation that many of recent or on-going institutional engineering reforms officially aim at empowering, if not restoring, parliaments within their institutional system. This has not always been the case. Throughout the 20th century, many constitutional changes aimed at strengthening the executive power decisional capacity by implementing various ways of rationalizing parliaments. Converging examples from the control over military operations to the budgetary powers of the parliament indicate that this is seemingly no longer the case. In developed democracies but also elsewhere, many institutional reforms officially aim at deepening parliamentary democracies. Yet, other institutional reforms can be driven by other aims, for instance controlling budgetary deficits, adapting to a country's participation to regional organizations, strengthening judicial review or transparency, implementing better regulation agendas, etc. The multiplicity of agendas for institutional reforms inevitably raises the issue of the coherence and compatibility between them.

The workshop addresses classical questions to that trend: 'why and how?' 'so what?'

1. With the 'why?' and 'how?' issues, we aim at entering into the politics of institutional engineering. Why are constitutional or standing orders reforms affecting legislatures launched? In which political contexts? Are those reforms more likely when national parliaments are comparatively weaker? What is the input provided by regional organizations, international treaties and transnational organizations from the OECD to the Inter-Parliamentary Union?

The point also requires to address the specific role played individually and collectively by MPs in the process. Are agendas for institutional reforms decided thanks to their pressure and initiatives? Or are they imposed by external actors such as ministers, judges, legal scholars, etc.?

2. The workshop also holds the ambition to assess the effects of institutional engineering. At the end of day, does changing the rules really impact on the legislatures' role? We know that there could be many factors contributing to limit or cancel the effects of such reforms: the

weight of inherited institutional routines, the lack of relevance of an institutional agenda from an MP interest based perspective, the lacking fit of institutional transfers given domestic idiosyncrasies, etc. Many claims can be put for explaining the absence of change. Yet, there are cases where a change of rules does impact on political behavior and even policy outputs even if it is sometimes the case indirectly or unexpectedly. Why do some reforms succeed and others not? Does their impact depend on the quality of the 'engineer' or on the capacity of MPs to adapt?

The evaluation of institutional engineering reforms can also be made from the perspective of the legislatures' influence. Given the multiplicity of the official aims addressed by the reforms, and their possible inconsistency, which kind of reforms - or which mixture – eventually contributes to empower legislatures? Beyond the assessment of a specific case, is institutional engineering able to fight back against the centennial trend of domination of the executive power?

Proposals should deal with any kind of institutional reforms affecting the parliaments' power. Papers presenting case studies or larger analyses of those two points are expected. We welcome proposals from various disciplinary fields including political scientists, legal scholars and historians. A diversity of methods is also welcome.

Location: Sciences Po, Paris

Conveners: Selma Bendjaballah, Olivier Rozenberg, Guillaume Tusseau (Sciences Po)

Proposals to be sent before **October 15th 2015** to olivier.rozenberg@sciencespo.fr

Part of the costs are covered for PADEMIA institutions members

Organisation:

PADEMIA (<http://pademia.eu/>)

LIEPP (Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies)

<http://www.sciencespo.fr/liepp/en>

Centre d'études européennes <http://cee.sciences-po.fr/en>

PADEMIA – Erasmus Academic Network on Parliamentary Democracy in Europe, financially supported by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme



This project is co-funded, by a public grant overseen by the French National Research Agency (ANR) as part of the "Investissements d'Avenir" program LIEPP (ANR-11-LABX-0091, ANR-11-IDEX-0005-02).