

IPSA Congress Madrid 2012 – Panels proposed by RC08-Legislative Specialists (RCLS)

RCLS will organize three panels:

Panel (1) The role of parliamentary opposition in the legislative process

Abstract

Parliamentary opposition plays an essential role in the vital functioning of democracy. Contemporary parliamentary opposition has different faces, depending on political, legal and cultural settings.

The panel focuses on the role of parliamentary opposition in the old and the new democracies and its role in the legislative and wider political processes. Opposition parties make a national debate possible on important issues facing a country. Indeed, it is said that the chief function of the opposition is to propose, oppose, expose, and depose. The members of the opposition in a national legislature have objectives and policies distinct from those of the ruling party (parties), and want to achieve them to the fullest extent possible. They must propose measures with a view to furthering the cause of their policy preferences, which may or may not find favour with the majority party. They initiate certain bills, motions and resolutions incorporating their party's political objectives and policies for the consideration and acceptance of the legislature.

The opposition hardly ever misses a chance to expose the misdeeds and lapses of the government and is always on the lookout for skeletons in government's closet. The ultimate objective of the opposition is to depose the government and provide an alternative one of its own.

However, the parliamentary opposition can make the legislative process more complicated, controversial and time consuming. It also makes the legislative process more transparent and may contribute to higher quality outcomes.

The panel aims to open discussion on the various issues sketched out and welcomes papers concentrating on various aspects and roles of parliamentary opposition in the legislative process. The panel strongly supports comparative contribution, but is also open to theoretically oriented single case studies.

Panel (2) The role of representative assemblies in autocratic and semi-democratic systems

Abstract

The topic of the panel covers a broad spectrum of circumstances in which representative assemblies function within systems where authoritarian systems operate. This topic will cover the rapidly developing post-communist parliaments which could be characterized as "parliaments in adolescence," liberalized autocracies, which have witnessed a "transition" away from—and then back toward—authoritarianism – reversed transitions, countries with controlled liberalization and prevailing autocratic system.

In the successful transition, following variables have been found to be defining dimensions: constitutional choices, territorial and social contexts, levels of stability, and degrees of observance of democratic norms and rules.

During the post-communist transition, political problems emerging democracies have faced include the varied fates of communist parties, the emphasis upon personal leaders, the relative stability of the political system, and finally, their different international affiliations. Thus one of the questions the panel aims to answer is to what extents do the above outlined variables

relate to the cases of representative assemblies in autocratic and semi-autocratic systems including the emerging democracies of the most recent transition wave – the Arab Spring. Other topics might include the competition between parliament and politically strong non-parliamentary institutions and the role of international programs and organizations which might help the development of parliamentary institutions. A comparative approach is preferred, however, theoretically oriented country studies will also be accepted.

Panel (3) The costs and benefits of organized interest representation in the parliamentary process

Abstract

Multi-level governance, in which a greater number of players (i.e. international, national and non-governmental organizations) are becoming involved in politics, is being established in many political systems as a byproduct of globalization. However, this process has its costs and benefits. In addition to elected representatives, more and more special-interest groups and civil society organisations are entering the political arena. In this changing environment, where special-interest groups are taking part in preparing policies and implementing them, the difference between formal and informal representations is slowly disappearing. In this context, the issues of accountability and legitimacy are becoming more complex and the theory of representation may need to be reconceptualised to reflect these changes.

The aim of the panel is to explore the interaction between parliaments, organized interest groups, civil society organizations, and other lobbying groups. The panel will concentrate on the variations in relationship between organized interest groups and parliaments such as internal variables such as institutional choice, institutional milieu, intra-parliamentary milieu and external factors. Furthermore it will explore the variations in the types of: actors included in the legislative process, agendas organized interests aim to influence; and the various conditions under which difference organized interest actors are successful.

Papers dealing with new theoretical concepts of representation and accountability, as well as empirically based papers concentrating on different models and practices of organized interest representation in the parliamentary process are invited.

Application Rules:

Non members of RCs are encouraged to participate in RC sessions. The names of the RCs and an invitation to non-members to submit paper proposals to the RC Chairs will be displayed on the IPSA Congress website as of August 31, 2011. Deadline to submit RC panel proposals is August 18, 2011.

Each paper presented in the panel needs to be submitted individually by the paper giver. Individuals submitting a paper will have the opportunity at that time to indicate that their paper has already been accepted for an RC panel.

Occasionally, papers which seem appropriate for an RC session arrive through the open call route used for congress sessions. The PC may submit some of the proposals that have been received for the consideration of the RC chairs for inclusion in their panels. The RC chair may decide to incorporate such a proposal into an RC panel or return it to the PC for inclusion in

congress sessions. The following note will be included on the Abstract Submission webpage:

If you wish to submit your abstract to a Main Theme or Research Committee (RC) session, you must contact the Main Theme Chair or RC Chair to advise them of your intentions. Non-members of RCs are encouraged to participate in RC sessions. You should send a copy of your abstract to the RC Chair or convenor, indicating the appropriate panel. All proposals must still be submitted via the online submission process. All such abstracts will be carefully considered.

Paper proposals for the three panels organized by RCLS have to be sent to the following addresses:

werner_j.patzelt@tu-dresden.de (RCLS co-chair)

squirep@missouri.edu (RCLS co-chair)

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