Workshops Proposal
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Workshop Title: Cohesion, Dissent and Partisan Politics in European Legislatures

Outline of the Topic:
There is a rich body of research on legislative politics and legislative behaviour including the study of roll call voting and party cohesion in the United States Congress and the European Parliament where scholars have used a variety of techniques such as roll-call analysis and surveys of party policy preferences based on party manifestos and expert surveys to build important datasets that have made theory building and the testing of hypotheses possible (Poole and Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997; Poole 2005; Hix, Noury and Roland 2007; Benoit and Laver 2002, 2006; Klingemann et al. 2006; Whitefield et al. 2007). However, research on legislative politics and behaviour at the level of national parliaments in Europe is much more limited, ad-hoc and disjointed (note Giannetti and Laver 2001; Kam 2001, 2009; Rosenthal and Voeten 2004; Spirling and McLean 2007; Landi and Pelizzo 2006, 2009; Curini and Zucchini 2008; Noury and Mielcova 2005; Lyons and Lacina 2009). This is unfortunate because it hampers the development of comparative theories of partisanship, policymaking and institutions to explain the interplay between legislative party politics at both the national and European levels.

For example, we do not know if and to what extent cohesion and competition in the multi-party groupings of the European Parliament is due to the autonomy that MEPs enjoy under the singular model of EU governance – where executive and electoral politics are largely disconnected – or to party incentives imposed by principals (the national party organizations) on their agents (the MEPs). Indeed, there is no coherent body of comparative research that focuses specifically on the different institutional and strategic incentives facing legislators operating in domestic parliaments in Europe (Hix and Noury 2008a, Hix 2008b). Yet legislative research in the European Parliament indicates that national parties are the driving force behind the growing cohesion of MEPs (Hix 2002, 2004).

Applying theories and methods developed in the United States to study legislative behaviour in European parliaments is problematic for two main reasons. First, many of the
formal theories of legislative behaviour developed for the US houses of Congress require empirical estimates of parliamentary party groupings policy positions. Policy positions have been derived from many different sources: post-election mass survey data, MRG data, expert surveys, legislator surveys, content analysis of text produced by legislators or parties which has been hand or computer coded. Different data sources often produce different estimates resulting in methodological questions regarding validity and reliability (Whitefield et al. 2007). Second, while partisan voting in the US Congress has been increasing, levels of party cohesion in roll call voting are generally higher in Europe than in the US presumably because in Europe ‘party’ structures legislative decisions and consequently party discipline is more strongly enforced. This implies that the spatial models used to estimate legislators’ ideal points from roll call data are likely to capture both party discipline effects plus legislators’ sincere policy positions (Spirling and McLean 2007; Lyons and Lacina 2009; cf. Rosenthal and Voeten 2004). To avoid this problem, it might be sensible to undertake case studies of specific roll call votes in salient policy domains rather than undertake analyses of all roll calls (Giannetti and Laver 2008). Of course, this raises another research challenge: how to determine issue saliency and select the relevant issues that are likely to capture most accurately the degree of legislative dissent that exist in specific parliaments and parties?

Consequently, the objective of this workshop will be to bring together scholars working on legislative parties in European national legislatures and in the European Parliament with a view to examine the conditions under which legislative cohesion (or dissent) are generated by different structural, institutional and strategic incentives (or constraints) operating in different national parliaments and party organizations. This requires examining and measuring different aspects of legislative behaviour such as party affiliations and party switching, partisan preferences, party unity and party cohesion, legislative coalitions, factional affiliations and factional behaviour - under the assumption that competitive factionalism (Boucek, 2009) within legislatures indicates dissent.

Hence, from this perspective, legislative parties are aggregate actors, made up of individual legislators and groups of legislators with specific partisan/factional affiliations and policy preferences who are willing to coalesce and vote with their party, or to divide and dissent in order to pursue specific office/policy/career goals. Incentives are institutional and strategic and parties and legislators play a role in shaping their environment. Questions that we hope to address in this workshop include the following.
• To what extent are legislative parties in European national parliaments cohesive because of electoral incentives (under the assumption that voters dislike disunited parties) or institutional/party incentives (linked to legislators’ career advancement)?
• Is it possible to develop a comparative framework of incentive structures to guide our understanding of legislative behaviour in European parliaments?
• What are the conditions that lead to the emergence of legislative factions?
• Does it make sense to apply spatial models of legislature derived from roll-call analysis to a context where party discipline rather than legislators (ideal point) policy preferences is most important?
• What can roll call analysis using standard techniques such as NOMINATE, IDEAL, Optimal Classification, or more recent methods based on social network techniques, tell us about the logic of party cohesion and discipline and switching in European legislatures?
• How is it possible to model legislators’ decisions to abstain during roll call votes, and what are the consequences of treating roll abstentions as ‘missing’ or voting against the party? [In some decision-making bodies such as the EU Ministers’ Council(s) abstentions do not count as ‘no’ votes.]
• Does the integration of data from different sources such as (a) roll call data, (b) surveys of legislators, (c) measurements of party and individual legislators’ policy positions through content analysis of manifestoes, computer content analysis [e.g. Wordscore and Wordfish], or (d) expert surveys represent a fruitful means of cross-validation of different sources of evidence? Can different sources of data on legislators be integrated to provide a more comprehensive test of theories of legislative behaviour?

Relation to existing research: This workshop aims to explore how the methods and models of legislative behaviour developed in the United States may be fruitfully used in European legislatures. Such work extends previous research by (1) testing existing theories of legislative behaviour in new institutional contexts thereby laying the foundations for future advances in legislative research, and (2) focusing on three key substantive topics – party cohesion, party discipline and party switching through the use of two central methodological approaches: measurement of party and legislator’s policy positions, and spatial modelling of roll call data.

Participants: Paper proposals are invited from new and established scholars concentrating on the study of legislatures, legislative parties and legislative politics including intra-party politics. The likely participants in the workshop are scholars engaged in research on the dynamics of legislative behaviour from a political science perspective. Consequently, this workshop welcomes papers dealing with empirical and formal theoretical questions. The workshop will concentrate on legislative parties in national legislatures across Europe and in the European Parliament.

Type of paper: Interested participants are invited to submit theoretical and empirical papers adopting (a) a theoretically informed case study approach, (b) a comparative perspective, (c) explorations of methodological issues such as the merits of applying US based roll call voting models derived from spatial models in Europe.
**Funding:** Françoise Boucek has put in a bid for a Queen Mary ‘Westfield Small Grant’.

**Endorsement:** This proposal has the support of two ECPR Standing Groups: ‘Parliaments’ and ‘Political Parties’.

**Biographical notes:**
Françoise Boucek is a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Politics, Queen Mary University London since 2003. She was previously Research Officer in the Public Policy Group at the London School of Economics. Her main research focuses on political parties, especially dominant parties, and the comparative study of factionalism and party organisation. She has recently published an article on ‘Rethinking Factionalism’ (2009) in *Party Politics* 15(4), an edited volume *Dominant Political Parties and Democracy* (Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science, June 2010) co-edited with Matthijs Bogaards and a monograph *Factional Politics: How Dominant Parties Impplode or Stabilize* (Palgrave Macmillan, due out in 2011).

Daniela Giannetti is a Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Bologna and is currently Chair of this department. Her research interests and publications focus on rational choice theory of political behaviour and institutions. In addition to a number of articles published in international journals such as Journal of Politics, Electoral Studies and European Journal of Political Research she recently co-edited with Kenneth Benoit (Trinity College Dublin) a book examining *Intra-Party Politics and Coalition Governments* (Routledge/ECPR series, 2009).

**Overview of the Literature**
The following literature represents some of the main (recent) works on the key themes that will be addressed in this workshop on legislative behaviour in Europe. These references also reflect the theories and methods that might inform the papers to be presented at this workshop.

**Legislative Parties (General)**

**Legislative Party Cohesion and Discipline**


**Legislative Roll Call Analysis**


**Legislative Party Switching**


**Estimating Party Policy Positions and Legislative Theory Testing**


**Factionalism and legislative factions**


