Proposal for a Workshop at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops
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The Role of Political Agency in the
Constitutional Politics of the European Union

Workshop Directors
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Outline of the Topic
In recent years, the constitutional politics of the EU have taken a significant turn. A debate on the future of Europe, followed by a European Convention, has led to a Draft Constitutional Treaty. The subsequent Intergovernmental Conference may have failed so far to agree on the adoption of this treaty, but the politics of writing a constitution for the European Union have become intertwined with the attempts to reform the EU in the light of enlargement and further challenges. What used to be the domain of legal discussions has now received the attention of policy-makers at all levels and, albeit to a limited extent, the wider public in Europe.

These important developments shaping the future governance of Europe deserve scientific attention, also and in particular from political scientists. It is a field of study which in the past has been dominated by legal scholars and by those who have approached treaty reform through more conventional either-or perspectives, arguing for example that either governments are the only actors that matter in constitutional negotiations, or supranational institutions have been the motor of the integration process. This workshop seeks to address the resultant limitations in the academic study of European politics by specifically addressing the role of agency in the constitutional politics of the EU, attempting to develop a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the process of constitutionalisation. It will seek answers to questions such as:

- Who are the key actors in the constitutional politics of the EU?
- What are their strategies and resources?
• What is their mode of interaction in the negotiations, and how is this shaped by the nature of the negotiation environment?

• How do actors behave in the different phases of constitutional reform?

• To what extent have they succeeded in achieving their objectives, and why?

• Whose preferences does the Draft Constitution reflect, and why?

• How may actors change the constitution in the future?

Relation to Existing Research

The workshop will link to existing research in a number of important ways. First, it will connect political science to the existing body of legal research on constitutional issues, both in general and with particular attention to the European Union. Second, it will link with the existing body of research into EU treaty reform, expanding its limited either/or focus by asking questions about a wider range of participants in the politics of reform, and focusing attention on the conditions under which actors have been influential in constitutional negotiations. Third, it will of course relate to the existing body of scholarship on the politics of the European Union, drawing on the insights generated by research into EU politics and directing these towards the more specific issue of constitutional reform. This will allow a number of distinct communities of political scientists – political theory, public administration, EU studies, international relations, policy-studies, comparative politics – to co-operate in the study of a potentially unique phenomenon. Finally, it will allow for scientific – both theoretical and empirical – research into an issue of high topical relevance on which there is a growing body of publications by observers, participants and journalists.

Type of Papers

The workshop will seek a broad range of papers on this subject. The papers we wish to attract may fall into the following categories:

• Theoretical papers which seek to provide new or develop existing analytical frameworks for the study of political agency in EU constitutional politics, in particular papers which
  
  o Facilitate the linkage between the study of agency and existing research in areas which are less actor-centred such as deliberative politics or discursive analysis
Facilitate better understanding and application of concepts used in legal analysis and in constitutional theory

- Empirical papers focusing on the various actors involved in the constitutional politics, and their involvement in the various arenas and debates, in particular
  - Institutional actors at the European level (Commission, Council Secretariat, European Parliament, ECJ)
  - Member States, either as collective actors or in terms of individual state representatives
  - Non-state actors such as NGOs, interest groups, churches, and others that have been directly or indirectly involved in EU constitutional politics

- Methodological papers that discuss the need for, and ways of, operationalising abstract concepts of constitutional theory for empirical research into the role of agency in constitutional reform.

**Potential Workshop Participants**

In the process of preparation for the workshop, a number of scholars working on various aspects of this issue have been approached, and have indicated their interest in submitting paper proposal. This does not preclude at all the formal selection of papers that will be based purely on the basis of academic quality of the proposals received, but merely serves to demonstrate the potential interest in the academic community for this workshop. So these are just a few names of

- Jonas Tallberg, *University of Lund*
- Colette Mazzucelli, *Columbia University* and *Sciences Po*
- Jan Beyers, *University of Leiden*
- Christine Reh, *European University Institute*

**Funding**

The workshop directors are pursuing a number of ways to provide additional funding to maintain this project. Derek Beach is in the process of applying to the Faculty Research Fund at the
University of Aarhus, and also to the Danish Social Science Research Council. Thomas Christiansen has applied for funding from the Research Fund of the European Institute of Public Administration.

Biographical Notes

Derek Beach
Derek Beach, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark. M.Sc. from the London School of Economics, Ph.D. from the Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark. Has published books on the European Court of Justice and EU intergovernmental negotiations, together with articles in leading journals on related subjects.

Thomas Christiansen
Thomas Christiansen is Senior Lecturer and Project Leader at the European Institute for Public Administration, Maastricht (NL). He is member of the Steering Committee of the ECPR Standing Group on the European Union and co-editor of the Europe in Change Series at Manchester University Press. He has published widely on various aspects of institutional politics in the EU, and is currently co-authoring Constitutionalising the European Union for the European Union Studies series at Palgrave Macmillan.