

Selma Bendjaballah

PhD Student

Centre d'Etudes Européennes de Sciences Po

75007 Paris- FRANCE

Selma.bendjaballah@sciences-po.org

**The European Parliament and the US House of Representatives in a
comparative view. Polarization and standing committees.**

Preliminary findings

INTRODUCTION

Although the European Parliament (EP) is more studied today than in the last decades, its internal organization remains less explored. Papers devoted to the European Legislature are indeed mainly descriptive, furnishing statistical facts on the number of MEPs, or committees (Corbett, Jacobs & Schackleton, 2007). I intend to fill part of this gap in research on the internal organization of the EP: for example, the question of political cleaving ought to be more studied, as it is well known that from the beginning of the 2000's, the first dimension of competition in the EP is a classic left-right one (Hix, Roland & Noury, 2007).

I intend to look at this question of left-right competition by focusing on permanent committees. Studies of this committee's activity are indeed rare. Despite the recent article published by Damgaard & Mattson (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004), we lack a study devoted to EP committees; that's why we need a comparison with a legislature in which the activity of committees has been largely studied. That is the main reason, besides analytical reasons exposed below, why this paper compares the EP with the US House of Representatives (HR).

First, the European Union (EU) and the United States political systems share federalist tendencies: they're both based on "the notion of separation of powers and the notion of executive- legislative independence" (Kreppel, 2006: 10).

Second, the internal organization and policy-making role of the EP look more like those of the HR than of the European Legislatures. Among the Congressional characteristics is the predominant role of committees. In particular, the critical role and legislative authority of committees are related. The permanent committees in the EP are also described as its "legislative backbones" (Westlake, 1994): their influence in the European legislative process is incontestable, which justifies comparison with congressional committees.

More important for the purpose of this note, the HR and the EP used to be seen as slightly organized around political groups. The EP would have been a consensual Legislature, and the HR, a “committee government” institution. However, some authors highlight today a common change in both Legislatures, i.e. a greater polarization between the parliamentary parties. In the EP, the left-right dimension is the main dimension of conflict (Hix et al., 2007). In the HR, the presence of split outcomes, the correlation between House and presidential outcomes, and individual-level data indicate a resurgence of partisanship in the House (Stonecash, 2006). This recent trend has several manifestations that affect committees and political parties.

Since 1994 and the “Republican Revolution”, political parties in the HR play a stronger role than before. Three major reasons explain this turn. First, the ideological sorting by party, following the desertion of Southern conservative Democrats, has extended to elected officials, creating two rival teams. Second, the “Contract with America” included rules that cut off the independence of committees: for example, Gingrich has created a number of leadership task forces to write key legislation- normally written by committees. Third, when Bush came to the Presidency, he chose a sharply partisan approach to making policy (Mann & Ornstein, 2007). He encouraged House partisan leaders to ban amendments by the Democrats. This cut House Democrats out of the process, as in the case of the airline security bill (after 9/11) debates¹. As a consequence, parties are today seen as the fundamental organizing principle in the HR, with legislators asking for a positive image of their party, including a strong policy record (Hix, 1999). The outcome of this “Revolution” is enhanced discipline within the parties: the desire to produce legislative results led to the collapse of deliberation.

Regarding the EP, recent analyses highlight that parliamentary groups have become over the years much more cohesive than their American counterparts (Hix et al., 2007).

¹ Democrats and Republicans disagreed whether the airport screeners would be federal employees or privatized, and whether the Patriot Act would be made permanent

Furthermore, the left-right cleaving is more than ever confirmed in studies of roll-call votes (RCVs)². There are two reasons for this. First, with the East Europe Enlargement in 2004, new political groups entered in the EP. In particular, left-wing partisan formations are more euro sceptical than their counterparts. Then, the analysis of the roll-call votes in 2005-2006 shows that MEPs explain their votes by their fidelity to the party (Hix et al., 2007). Second, the PES regularly denounced the current President of the Commission, Barroso, as was the case during the formation of the Commission in 2004. More generally, the “neo liberalism” supported by Barroso was highly denounced by the minority: Martin Schulz, the PES President, regularly asked Barroso to adopt neutral positions, in particular during the SIEG debates. This sharp opposition gave the EP a fighting spirit, and cut the traditional view of the EP as a consensual Legislature.

In this paper, I intend to link two facts: partisan polarization and committee activity. More precisely, I will study to what extent committees are the cockpits of partisan conflict, and what are the effects of polarization on the committees’ day-to-day activity. Committees are pertinent loci for studying polarization since they function as vital arenas for conflict resolution between political parties through compromise. As a consequence, if there is growing polarization and political disagreement between parties, committees would be responsible for that. Then, if partisan polarization occurs in the Parliament, it is because deliberation and negotiation in the committees failed. The reasons partisan compromise failed in the committees ought then to be explained.

I present in Section I some theoretical perspectives on conflict and consensus in committees. Section II is devoted to the statistical methods used to measure consensus and conflict in

² See details on : <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EPRG/>

committees. We consider various indicators and examine their effects on conflict in committees. The results are discussed and followed by some concluding remarks in the last section.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Parliamentary committees are often considered in the literature as “compromise arenas”: their function is to resolve conflict between antagonistic political views (Lees and Shaw, 1979; Sartori, 1987). Consensual committees are described as well functioning entities promoting influence for the Parliament. The implication is that there is “a positive correlation between strong committees, consensus in committees and strong parliaments” (Sartori, 1987). Following this assumption, the authors admit that if a strong committee is one that has a significant independent impact on legislative affairs, there may not be many such committees outside the US (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004).

This last assumption is a pertinent point of departure for my analysis. The “strength” of committees is supposed to explain partisan consensus; as a consequence, we could either study supposed “weak” committees (to see if they’re conflictive), or study other strong committees, namely the EP’s ones, and check whether they’re consensual. We choose the second option, to find whether indicators other than “strength” determine the level of consensus.

For the purpose of this note, I focus on two theories: first, the theory of consensus (Sartori, 1987); second, the theory of conflict (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004).

1. Sartori : the theory of consensus

According to Sartori, committees are interactive and face-to-face groups; they are highly institutionalized, which implies that “decisions are most often reached with unanimity: committees generally end up with unanimous agreement because each component of the group expects that what he concedes on one issue will be given back on some other issue” (Sartori, 1987, 229).

Consensus tends to emerge: members of different parties who work harmoniously together frequently converge around a joint approach. Consequently, parliamentary committees are often able to produce reports unanimously approved without a vote.

This theory was followed by the Neo-institutionalist authors: committees enable members to make commitments. Negotiations are expected to take place in the committees. Negotiation theory established that negotiations were more effective in small groups such as committees. Sartori indicates that unanimity is the normal mode of decision-making in committees. However, consensus, cooperation and unanimity are not universal. Members of certain committees opt for bargaining, accommodation and peaceful settlement of disputes, while others do not (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004).

2. Damgaard & Mattson: political conflict in West Europe Legislatures

Damgaard and Mattson notice that in the 1980's and 1990's, conflict is indicated in 18 Western European parliamentary committees in more than half of the valid cases (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004). Contrary to Sartori, the authors conclude that in Western European legislatures, conflict is more common than consensus in committees. There are several explanations:

- the number of hearings (the more their number, the deeper the conflict),
- the electoral system (there is conflict when voters have the chance to cast a vote for individual candidates),
- the committee size.

As a consequence, in their conclusion they show that other factors than strength explain the level of conflict and consensus in the committees. With the help of regression methods, Damgaard & Mattson analyze their results in terms of risks; they found that if the committee arranges a hearing during its deliberation or if candidate votes are possible, the risk for conflict is four times greater.

This study is interesting for my purpose as it proves that contrary to Sartorian conclusions, conflict exists in committees. Furthermore, it suggests that polarization affects the committees. Its expression remains to be explored.

II. STATISTICAL METHODS: MEASURING CONFLICT IN COMMITTEES

As I presented, Damgaard & Mattson studied conflict in West Europe parliamentary committees. A few years earlier, as the authors reported, in his analysis of the Bundestag, Von Beyme admitted that conflict existed in committees; in this context, it could be useful to propose statistical measures which could help determine the level of conflict in other legislatures (Von Beyme, 1998).

As a consequence, Von Beyme used the following indicators:

- Amendments proposed in the committees' sessions,
- Length of debates in parliament,
- Use of roll call voting,
- Margin of the majority,

- Echo in the media,
- Use of conference committees to settle disputes between the legislative branches,
- Share of committee reports with dissenting minority reports attached”.

Unfortunately, these factors can't be all applied to my comparative study. Indeed, the production of minority reports is not a rule commonly shared (it doesn't exist in the US Congress).

This study is also interesting because Von Beyme lists various concrete factors that characterize a committee's activity.

This section leads us to conclude that no single measure can cover the notion of conflict in committees. A combination of factors is more appropriate.

- Definitions

The first step is to define “partisan conflict”.

The definition Mattson and Damgaard proposed is the following: “conflict exists if a nay vote has been registered during the committee stage, or if a minority report has been attached to the committee report, or if another committee dissent was recorded” (Damgaard & Mattson, 2004, 114). However, the existence of a “nay” vote doesn't imply that the majority is “yea”. Then, if a majority in the committee votes “nay”, it couldn't be said that there is a conflict. Furthermore, if the attachment of a minority report is a rule that exists in the EP, it is not true for the HR. Nevertheless, we can't say that there is no conflict in the HR. As a consequence, the minority reports' attachment doesn't totally capture the reality of the conflict in committees.

As a consequence, I propose the following definition:

- Conflict exists if a majority of a party votes “yea” and a majority of another party votes “nay”.

The data set contains information on how votes have been dealt with by Parliaments in the period 1994-2004 (EP) (500 votes for each legislature) and 2003-2007 (HR) (300 votes for each session). The sample includes votes on own-initiative reports as well as votes taken under co-decision procedure (EP), bills, simple or joint resolutions (HR).

All of these bills were submitted to a minimum of one committee for consideration.

Although many of the bills in the data set have been considered by more than one committee, I have concentrated the analysis on votes in the main committee. Thus, only one committee is taken into account for each vote.

- Empirical findings

We use “r”, the correlation coefficient, as a way to capture the partisan consensus. Indeed, in this study, it measures the extent to which both parties vote in the same way. As a consequence, if both parties vote frequently in the same way, it reflects a relatively shared ideology. On the contrary, if the correlation coefficient is low, it means both parties vote in an antagonist way, which suggests the conflict.

The correlation coefficient is defined by the formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \langle x \rangle)(y_i - \langle y \rangle)}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \langle x \rangle)^2 \sum_{i=1}^N (y_i - \langle y \rangle)^2}},$$

Where the x_i are the RCVs of the party (EPP, Republicans) and y_i are the RCVs of the party (PES, Democrats) in the EP and in the HR respectively, and where $-1 \leq r \leq 1$.

The average values of the RCVs are given by $\langle x \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N x_i$ and $\langle y \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N y_i$.

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients for votes in the floor stage.

	EP (4 th + 5 th sessions)	HR (108 th + 109 th sessions)
Correlation coefficient (Average value)	0,35	-0,25

As shown in Table 1, conflict is indicated in more than half of the cases.

Furthermore, I notice a variation between legislatures: the highest level of conflict is found in the HR, where more than 80% of the bills lead to controversy. The lowest level is found in the EP, although conflict is still indicated in more than half of the cases.

The results show that the link between strength and consensus must be rejected: indeed, EP committees are considered to be strong, yet, a conflict exists in the European Legislature.

Furthermore, conflict is frequently at hand in both legislatures; but to what extent does it reflect the committee voting stage?

The main difficulty when measuring conflict in the permanent committees (EP- HR) is that no individual information on the votes in committees is available.

That is the reason I adopt the following method.

First, I choose committees whose fields of activity are as close as possible in the EP and in the HR. There are 8 of them:

- Foreign Relations
- Judiciary
- Economy and Financial Services
- Agriculture
- Culture and Education

- Industry and Energy
- Rules and Institutional Affairs
- Government Reform and Interior Affairs

Then, for each of the 1090 votes, I record the number of deputies sitting in one committee who vote “yea” in the floor stage. Each “yea” score is screened by partisan delegation (EPP, PES, Republicans, and Democrats); as a consequence, for each vote, I have two numbers: the number of committees EPP members (Republicans) “yea” votes and the number of committees PES members (Democrats) “yea” votes.

Finally, for each committee, I calculate the correlation coefficient r between the number of “yea” votes of the PPE (Republicans) and the number of “Yea” votes of the PES (Democrats), as defined above.

We must recall here that solutions to the ecological inference problem presented by King, could have helped (King, 2006): a method of inferring individual behaviour from aggregate data. Ecological inference is the process of using aggregate data to infer discrete individual-level relationships of interest when individual-level data are not available. King generalizes the method of bounds algebraically and with graphical methods. For example, for the election to the Ohio State House in 1990, what is the number of black citizens who vote for the Democratic candidate? We could use these methods to explain how parliamentary committees vote, thanks to data available on the plenary stage. However, these methods are based on a high number of electors (e.g. women in the Ohio State); in my study, the number of permanent deputies sitting in each committee isn't higher than 100. Nevertheless, I will try to apply these ecological inference solutions in a future work.

Three facts must be underlined:

- Conflict is higher in the HR than in the EP,
 - The level of conflict varies between committees,
 - Conflict increases with time in the HR but decreases in the EP
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- Explaining Variations

Looking beyond my first conclusion that conflict exists in the committee voting stage, I'm also interested in explaining the variation in conflict between the EP and the HR.

I can think of several explanations of conflict that must be explored. There are five hypotheses that should be made, and two categories of variables: key features of the committees; legislative and political environment of the Legislature.

First of all, there are 3 hypotheses that are linked to the day-to-day functioning of the committees.

1. First, the small size of committees increases the members' ability to work in a favourable atmosphere. In large committees relations between members are likely to be more impersonal and possibly more overtly partisan.
2. Second, I should also think that a high degree of specialization facilitates consensus in committees. The more specialized a committee is, the greater the pragmatic orientation to the work of the committee, and the lesser the likelihood of a partisan issue-based approach. This hypothesis implies that I define "specialization".
3. A high turnover in the membership of a committee is expected to work against consensus. The higher the stability in the membership, the greater the trust likely to be generated between members and also the easier it is to reach a compromise.

In addition, an analysis of the legislative context in which committees act should be included.

4. The fourth hypothesis deals with the number of votes on each procedure under committee scrutiny. More specially, the more the procedure used, the more the conflict.

Finally, I also include external specific variables, in particular the committees' autonomy from the executive, from the leadership structures, or from external sources of influence (i.e. lobbies)

5. The greater the autonomy, the greater the legislative power of committees. The greater the legislative power, the greater the opportunity for parties to politicise their views, and the more partisan the debates in committees. I will present later in this paper how autonomy is measured.

III. PRELIMINARY RESULTS

1. Bi-variate analysis

- The first test concerns the size of the committees.

Figure 1 & 2 show conflict by size, measured by the number of committee members. The horizontal axis represents the size of each of the 8 committees. The vertical axis measures the correlation coefficient computed in each of the 8 committees.

The regression logistic line shows that there is no evident variation: there is no relation between conflict and size, both in the EP and in the HR, except in the 109th session in the HR, where the relation is the reverse of that which was expected.

FIGURE 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE

- The second test concerns expertise. Individual specialization of the committee members is expected to facilitate consensus in committees.

Damgaard and Mattson study expertise as measured by the number of different committees: this number is intended to be correlated to the opportunity for members to specialize in their fields. However, I propose another definition, as both the EP and the HR have the same number of committees (i.e. 20). Then, I develop the following measure of specialization:

For a given committee, we define:

- N_r : the number of reports voted by a group
- N_e : the number of members sitting for N_p years in the committee.
- N_t : the total number of reports produced by N_d : the total number of members of the committee under study.
- The coefficient of expertise in a committee is given by:

$$\bar{e} = \sum_{N_p} \frac{1}{N_p} \frac{N_r}{N_t} \frac{N_d}{N_e}$$

This coefficient can be normalized in various ways. However, as it is defined, it assumes that new deputies choose a committee assignment because they're experts in one field.

FIGURE 3 & 4 ABOUT HERE

The horizontal axis represents the global expertise of each of the 8 committees. The vertical axis measures the correlation coefficient computed in each of the 8 committees.

On average, we notice a variation in the regression line, which indicates a positive correlation between the variables. In the EP and in the HR, if there is a variation, it indicates that the greater the expertise, the greater the consensus. Besides, let us note that the trend is more

pronounced in the EP than in the HR. It is finally noteworthy that the 2 variables are totally independent in the 109th session.

Then, it suggests that expertise explains more the partisan consensus in the EP than in the HR. How can this difference be explained? I assume one hypothesis: individual specialization in the HR was closely related to the seniority system; the longer time a deputy chaired a committee, the more it was able to gain expertise in the committee's field. However, nowadays, this system seems to have disappeared: the House has heavily relied on the seniority system because it avoids the possibility of conflicts within the majority party. But this arrangement is no longer relevant as the internal cohesiveness and polarization of the parties grow. House Republicans in the 1990's undermined seniority by changing party rules: committee chairmen were forced to share power with rank-and-file committee members. As a consequence, with the end of the seniority system, specialization is no more a determining factor in the functioning of the committees.

In the EP, the expertise is seen as a necessary way to define a common position within political groups, which are composed of numerous national delegations. Then, the expertise is more required in the EP than in the HR: it works as a "common language" among heterogeneous national preferences. It is a necessary condition to ensure cohesion and discipline in a political group.

- The third test includes membership turnover. The higher the stability, the greater the consensus between members. Indeed, the higher the incumbency, the better the deputies know each other and the more they trust each other, so that partisan conflict is reduced and political compromises are easier.

FIGURE 5 & 6 ABOUT HERE

The horizontal axis represents the turnover in each of the 8 committees. The vertical axis measures the correlation coefficient computed in each of the 8 committees.

When there is a variation in the EP, it shows that the larger the turnover, the larger the conflict. These observations tend to confirm the hypothesis. However, the link is more complex in the HR than in the EP: in the 108th session, the regression line shows that the smaller the turnover, the greater the conflict, which is the reverse of that which was expected. However, in the 109th session, the variables show that the larger the turnover, the larger the conflict.

I have so far investigated the 1st category of variables with mixed results for the theory. Conflict is not more probable in large committees. However, the theory is supported with regard to one variable: in the EP conflict appears to be more probable in committees where parliamentarians have expertise than in others, whereas in the HR, turnover is the most determinant factor.

I will now turn my attention to variables related to features of the legislative procedure. I assume that the more the procedure used, the greater the conflict.

To this end, from the sample of 1000 votes (EP) and 600 (HR), I compute the number of votes on each procedure.

- In the EP

6 procedures are studied; 3 are legislative, 2 are non legislative, and the last is the budgetary procedure: "Co-decision (Legislative), Consultation (Legislative), Assent (Legislative), Strategic document (Resolutions and initiatives), Own- Initiative (Resolutions and initiatives), Budgetary (Budgetary procedures)".

4 th session	Number of votes
Codecision	100
Consultation	200
Assent	12
Strategic document	47
Own initiative	112
Budgetary	26

5 th session	Number of votes
Codecision	155
Consultation	147
Assent	14
Strategic document	17
Own initiative	133
Budgetary	34

The consultation procedure is ranked in the first place (4th session) and in the 5th session, it is the co-decision procedure.

Figure 7 relates consensus and the number of votes on each procedure. The horizontal axis represents the number of votes on each procedure, screened by the 8 committees. The vertical axis measures the correlation coefficient computed in each of the 8 committees.

FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

First, I notice that there is no clear relation in the 4th session between consultation procedure votes and consensus. However, regarding the 5th session, there is a trend showing that consensus decreases with the number of co-decision bills. It confirms the fourth hypothesis.

How can this be explained? If the procedure doesn't give any legislative power to the Parliament, the position of the MEPs in the decision process doesn't matter. As a consequence, the political parties don't really defend their position, as they know the Parliament's position doesn't matter; compromise between the deputies is easier to reach than for important procedures.

- In the HR

4 procedures are studied: «bills, simple resolutions, joint resolutions, and concurrent resolutions».

108 th session	Number of votes
Bills	150
Simple Resolutions	97
Joint Resolutions	9
Concurrent Resolutions	41

109 th session	Number of votes
Bills	145
Simple Resolutions	124
Joint Resolutions	11
Concurrent Resolutions	20

FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE

The figure displays the variation between the number of bills and consensus; the two variables tend to be independent. How can it be explained? It is likely that procedures in the HR are

roughly more equivalent in terms of legislative power they confer to the Legislature, than in the EP. As a consequence, there is no stake for the deputies to defend their partisan views on one specific procedure, as each legislative formula can give them an identical political reward. There is no more conflict in one procedure than in another.

The second group of variables has shown that conflict is rather more frequent where the Parliament has unequally powerful legislative procedures, than where the procedures are well institutionalized and give the same level of power to the Legislature and its deputies. I will now study variables related to the political system in which both Legislatures evolve.

- The last hypothesis assumes that the greater the committees' autonomy (from the Executive branch), the more powerful the committees and the lesser the conflict. It is indeed assumed that committees having staff with strong professional experience fewer conflicts than others. This hypothesis implies we measure "autonomy".

There are many suggestions: first, I could choose the control of a committee's timetable as a criterion; more precisely, the committee stage in deliberation (before or after the plenary stage). However, in both Legislatures, the committee stage comes before the plenary stage. Second, I could choose the right to summon witnesses and to request documents; however, this criterion exists in both Legislatures. Then, I choose to select the size of each committee staff, because it gives information about committees' capacity and thereby independence from the executive. As a consequence, we should expect the larger the committee staff, the higher the autonomy. The higher the autonomy, the more powerful the committee, and the lesser the conflict. The committee staff size is measured in the EP by the number of heads of units,

administrators, and personal assistants; in the HR, it is measured by the number of personal and leadership staff, officers of the House staff, and legislative counsels' offices.

FIGURE 9 & 10 ABOUT HERE

The horizontal axis represents the staff size in each committee. The vertical axis measures the correlation coefficient computed in each of the 8 committees.

The results show that in the HR and in the EP, there is no clear variation; there is no clear relationship between conflict and committee staff. However, in the HR (in the 109th session), it must be noticed that there is a slight trend: the larger the staff, the higher the consensus. This last observation confirms the last hypothesis.

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

1. Multivariate analysis

To get a firmer grasp of the variables that best explain committee conflict, I conduct a multivariate logistic regression³. I include the different sets of variables presented in the bi-variate analyses. Variables were entered block-wise into the regression.

³ Let n be the number of responses y_j ($j=1, \dots, n$) and p be the number of the indicators chosen x_{jk} ($k=1, \dots, p$) where $p \leq 6$. Here $\{y\}$ denote the conflict coefficient r and $n=8$ is the number of committees.

The MATLAB routine used in this paper yields a column vector $\{b\}$ of dimension $p+1$ (a constant is necessary for the fitting of data) of coefficient estimates for a generalized linear regression of the responses in $\{y\}$ on the indicators in $\{x\}$ using a normal distribution.

This numerical program is useful mainly for understanding which indicator has greatest effects on r . This is given by the coefficient $\{b\}$ having the greatest magnitude. It is also useful for finding the directions of the effects which are given by the signs of the coefficient values $\{b\}$.

When we apply a bi-variate analysis, other indicators are supposed to be constant. On the contrary, with the multi-variate analysis, the variations of all indicators are taken into consideration.

Table 2. Multivariate analysis (EP)⁴.

	4th session	5th session
Membership turnover	-2.70	2.58
Committee size	0.19	0.02
Expertise	-2.49	-2.90
Most used procedure votes' number	0.06	-0.52
Staff size	0.01	-0.70

Table 3. Multivariate analysis (HR).

	108th session	109th session
Membership turnover	3.98	-3.67
Committee size	0.60	0.56
Expertise	-0.80	-0.60
Most used procedure votes' number (bills)	0.97	0.52
Staff size	-1.47	0.98

Regarding the EP, size, and expertise explain conflict and consensus. These observations confirm the conclusions of Damgaard and Mattson: according to them, expertise doesn't play any role in the committees' conflict, but the bigger the committee, the more the conflict, which is infirmed by my results.

In the HR, the results obtained must be checked again. However, we can notice that the indicators chosen have quasi the same function in the HR and in the EP, i.e. they are linked to conflict and consensus. More precisely, committees' size and expertise are relatively significant criteria. However, the number of bills plays a role in the HR, but not in the EP.

We must remember that the multivariable regression method compares the role of indicators. With other indicators, we would have had other results. For example, the number

⁴ The criterion is the correlation coefficient « r ». Correlation was attributed the value 1 and conflict -1.

of hearings and the electoral system could be included in a future analysis of conflict in committees.

Then, in the context of the comparison, it is noteworthy that factors which explain conflict and consensus in the EP and in the HR are identical, which suggests similarities in the day-to-day functioning of the Legislatures.

2. Conclusion

First, it seems obvious that an understanding of parliamentary committees cannot be built solely on the consensus notion. The study of conflict in committees is interesting for the comprehension of the legislature as a whole: the functioning of committees as conflict arenas explains how the democratic process works within the parliament. Partisan conflict in committees suggests that the legislature has institutionalized debate and negotiation between its parties. We proceeded with bi-variate and multivariate analyses in order to explain the variation in conflict. It is apparent that the legislative contexts of parliaments do have an impact on how the committees work. The legislative procedures under which the committees read and vote bills are important.

Second, not only committees in the EP and in the HR are both strong and conflictive, but their activity is also determined by the same factors.

Finally, this paper showed that to compare legislatures, analyzing the informal dimension is necessary. More precisely, informal aspects of parliamentary activity, i.e. expertise in our case, ought to be analyzed, because they may show similarities between legislatures. We think that to understand the institutionalization of the parliaments, external and internal levels must be taken into consideration together: the external effects (e.g. growing powers of the EP) have impact on the internal evolutions (e.g. expertise), and vice versa. It seems pertinent to take into account this hypothesis to analyze evolutions within legislatures.

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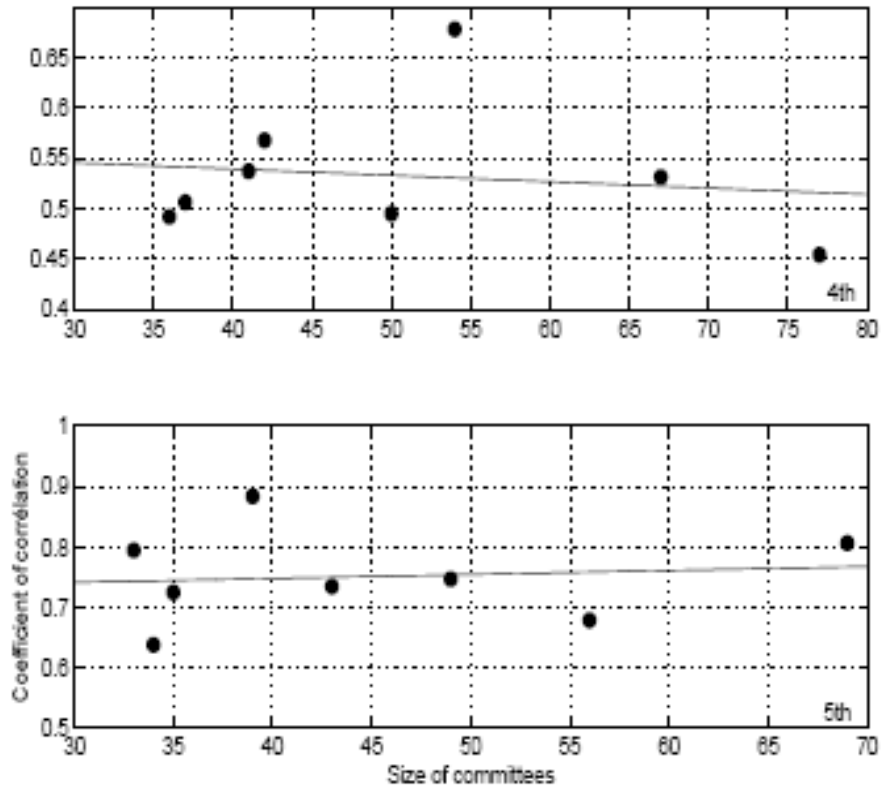
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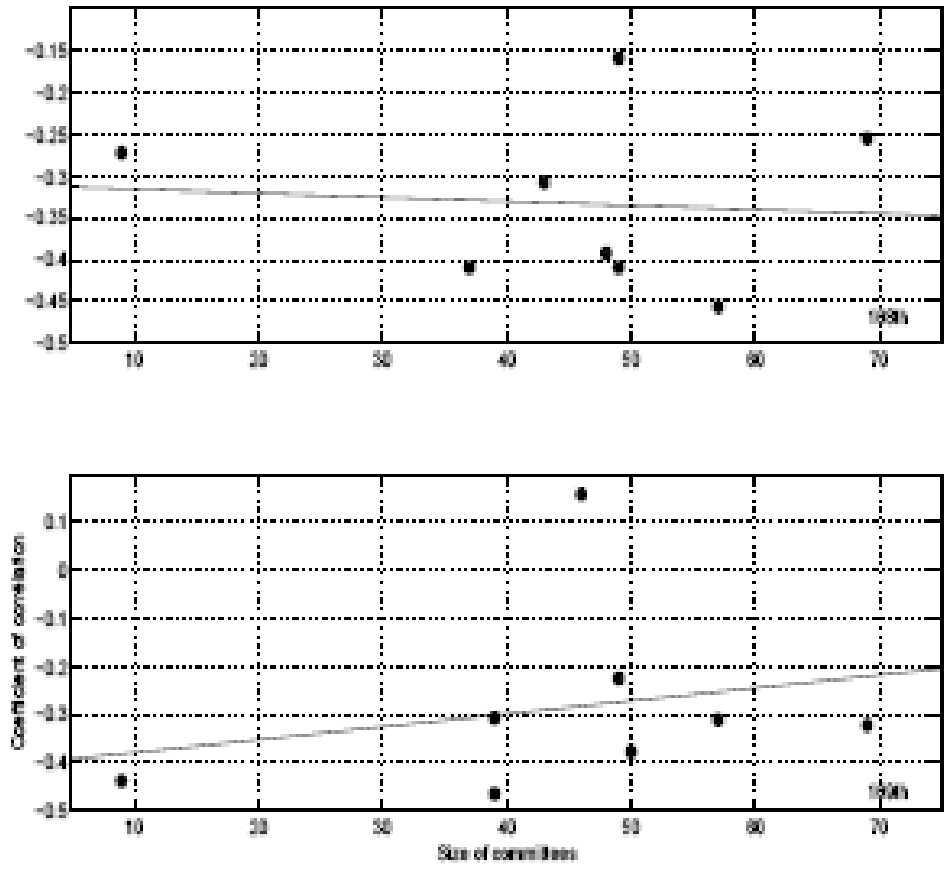
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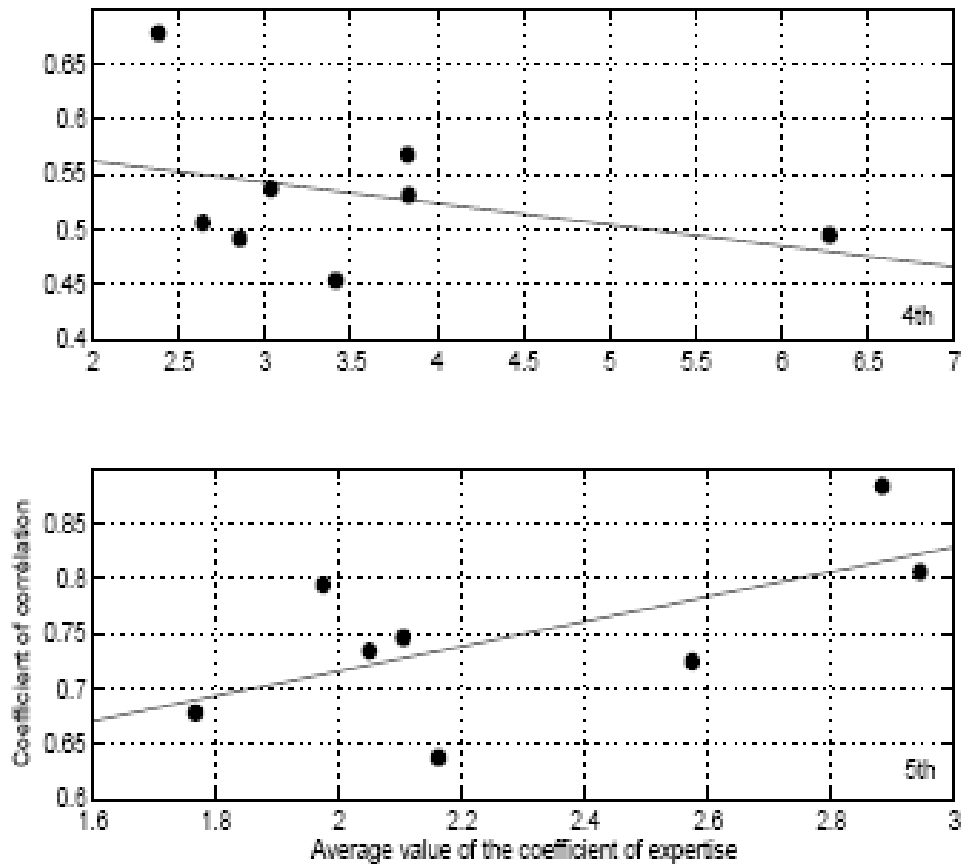
European Parliament: legislatures 4th and 5th.

Fig 1 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the turnover of MEPs for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



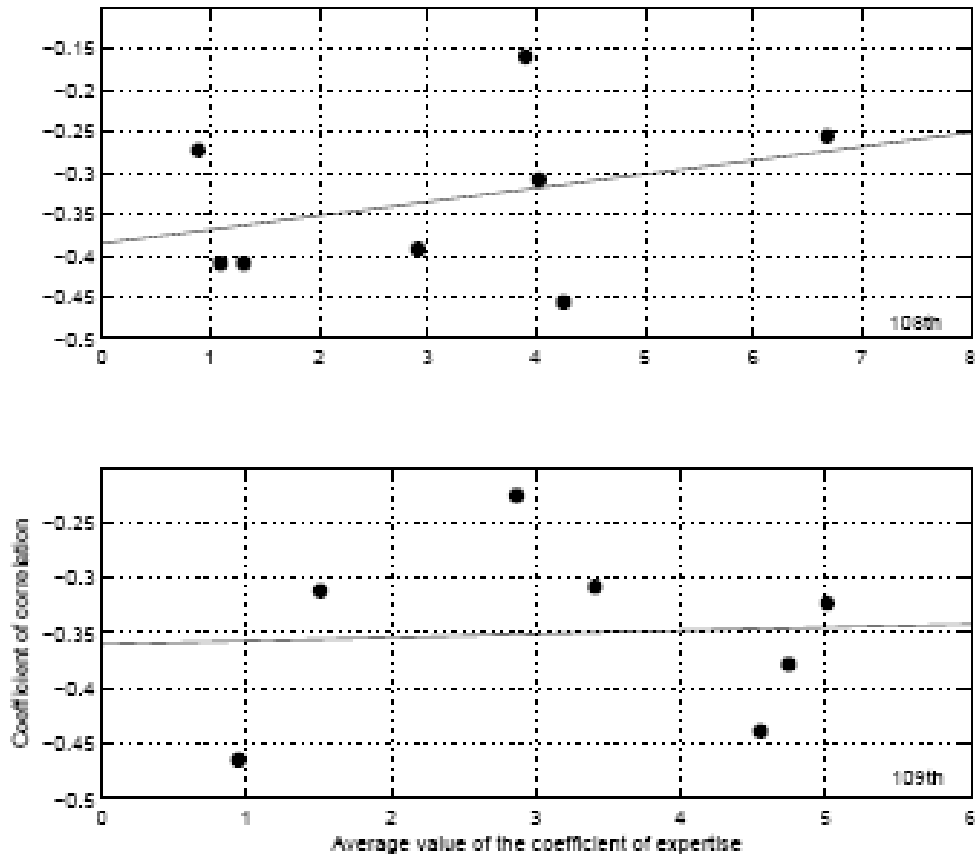
House of Representatives: legislatures 108th and 109th.

Fig 2 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the turnover of representatives for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



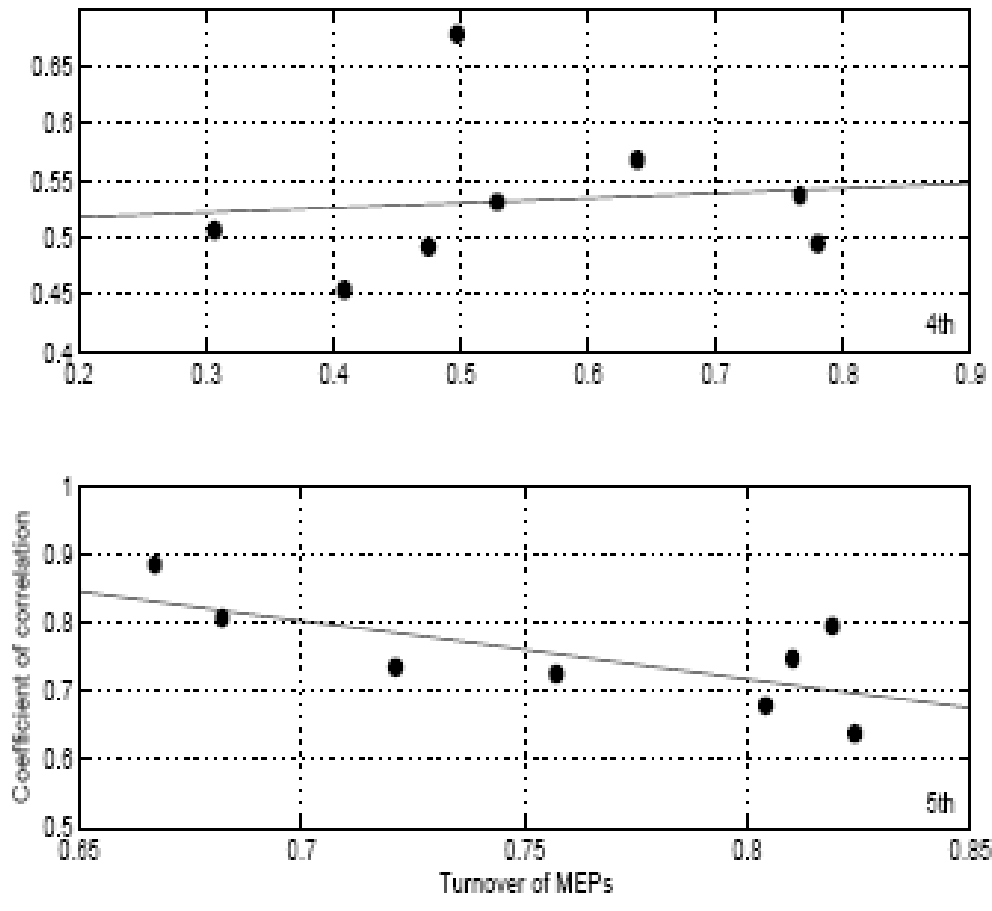
European Parliament : legislatures 4th and 5th.

Fig 3 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the average value of the coefficient of expertise for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



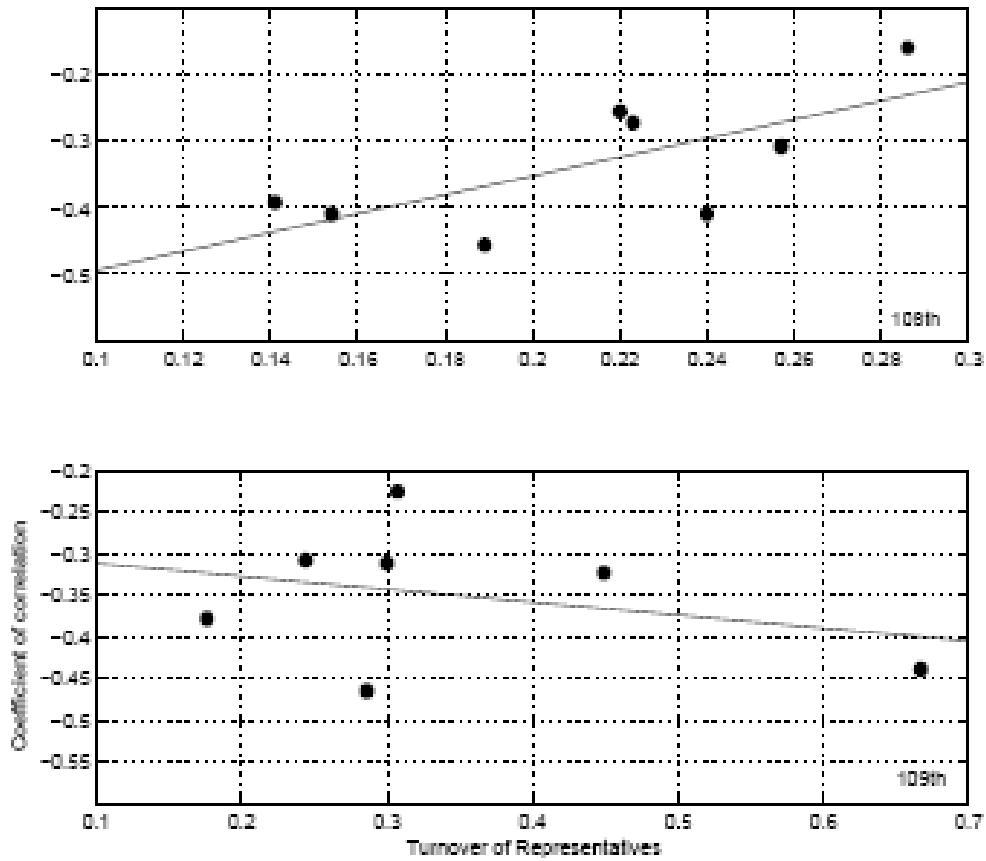
House of Representatives: legislatures 108th and 109th.

Fig 4 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the average value of the coefficient of expertise for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



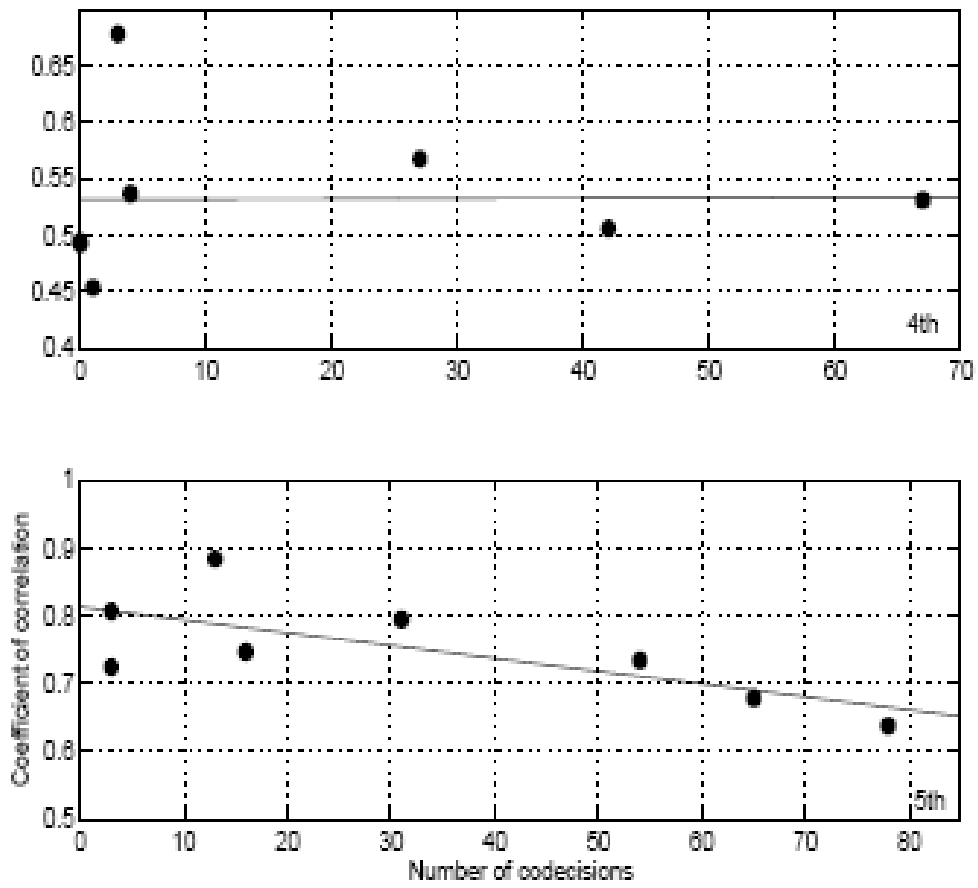
European Parliament : legislatures 4th and 5th.

Fig 5 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the turnover of MEPs for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



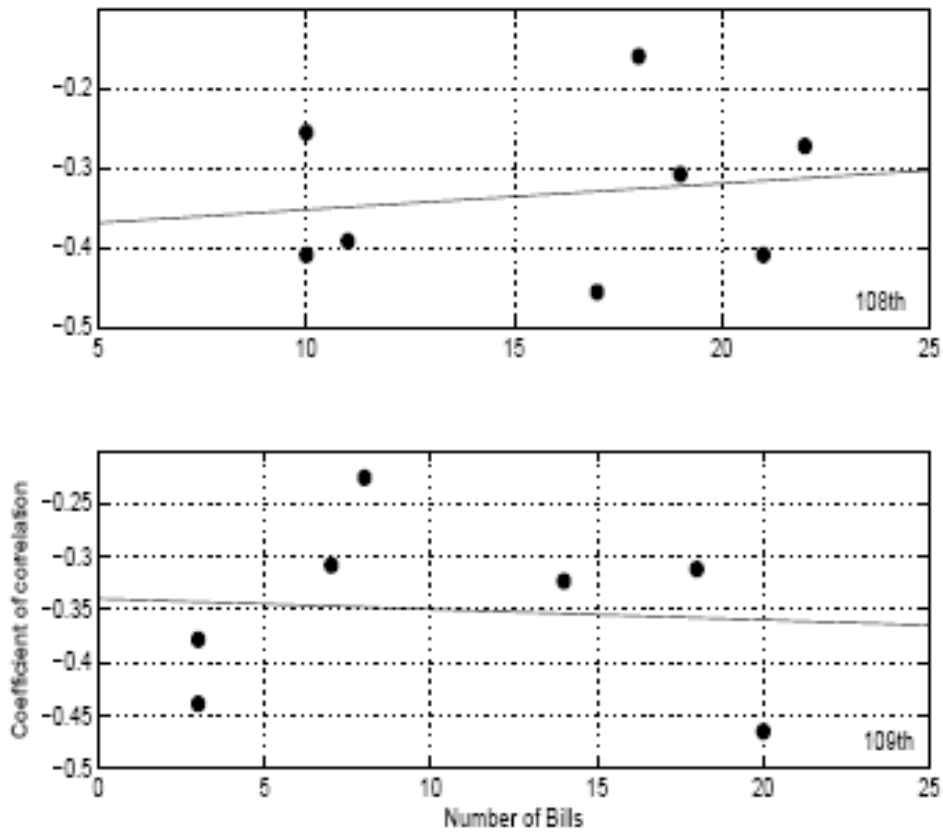
House of Representatives: legislatures 108th and 109th.

Fig 6 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the turnover of Representatives for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



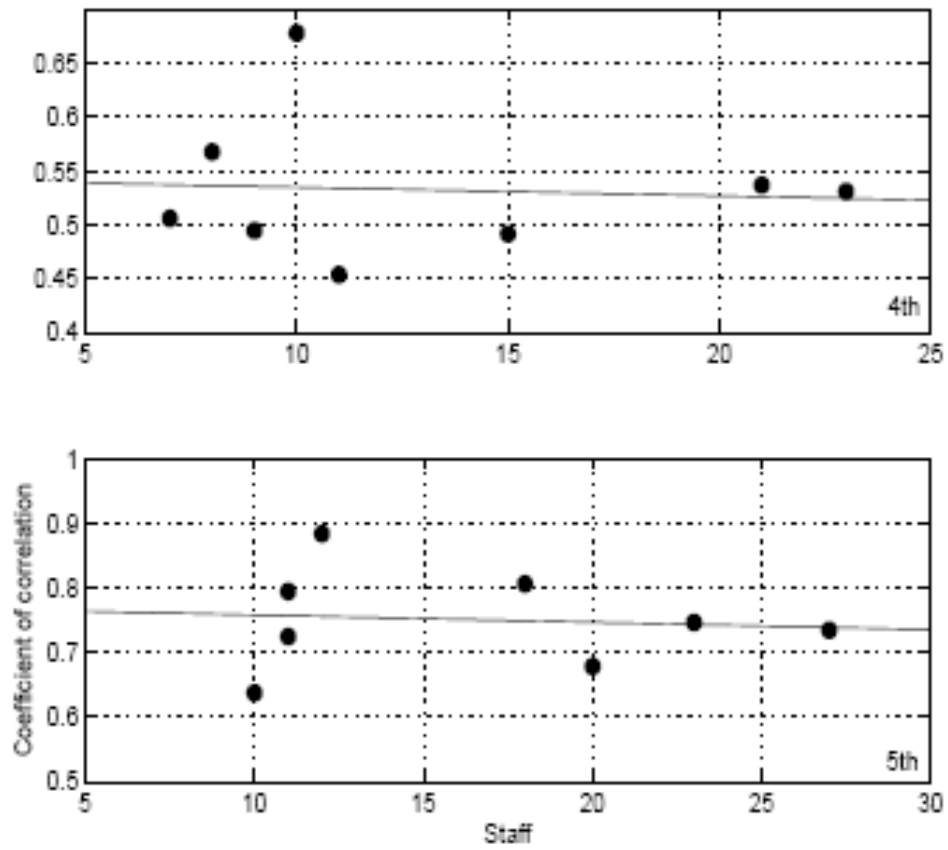
European Parliament : legislatures 4th and 5th.

Fig 7 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the number of codecisions for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



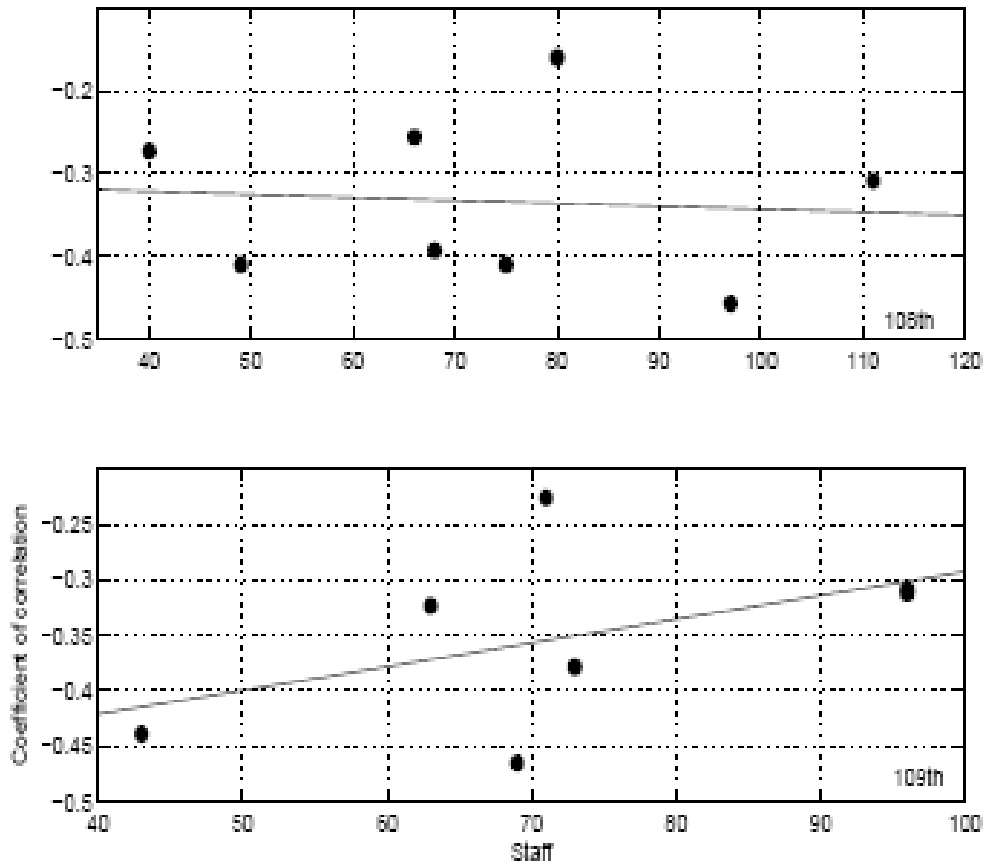
House of Representatives: legislatures 108th and 109th.

Fig 8 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the number of bills for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



European Parliament : legislatures 4th and 5th.

Fig 9 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the coefficient of staff for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.



House of Representatives: legislatures 108th and 109th.

Fig 10 : Plots of the coefficient of correlation r versus the coefficient of staff for eight committees. The line is derived from the regression logistic computation.