

Parliamentary Representation in France (Library of Legislative Studies)



Despite real improvements since the beginning of the last decade, legislative studies are still underdeveloped in France, compared to other modern democracies. This weakness is linked to the characteristics of the political system itself: the Constitution of 1958 has created a semi-presidential regime, the centrality of which has been constantly reinforced since. The French parliament is thus supposed to be extremely feeble. This lack of interest for legislative studies is also to be found in the specificities of French political sociology, which pays little attention to institutions. As a result, very few papers and books deal with French chambers and MPs. Yet, they are fascinating cases of study for scholars interested in parliamentary representation, professionalization of political life, and French politics. The French parliament and MPs are deeply paradoxical: MPs are very attached to the concept of national sovereignty but remain involved at local level and in surgery work; the French National Assembly is supposed to be weak, but is quite active and influential; citizens are more aware of the role of MPs than it seems, and their views and values are closer than predicted. This book gathers seven papers from the LEGIPAR research project (2008-2012). The project was designed by the contributors to rejuvenate French legislative studies by collecting systematic data on MPs socio-biographical profiles and activities, conducting face-to-face interviews, gathering exhaustive data on National Assembly activity and organising focus groups to analyse citizens perceptions of their MPs. This book was originally published as a special issue of the Journal of Legislative Studies.

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